

PLAYSTATION PC NINTENDO 64 GAME BOY

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The videogame magazine

January 1999
Issue 2 £2.70

Arcade

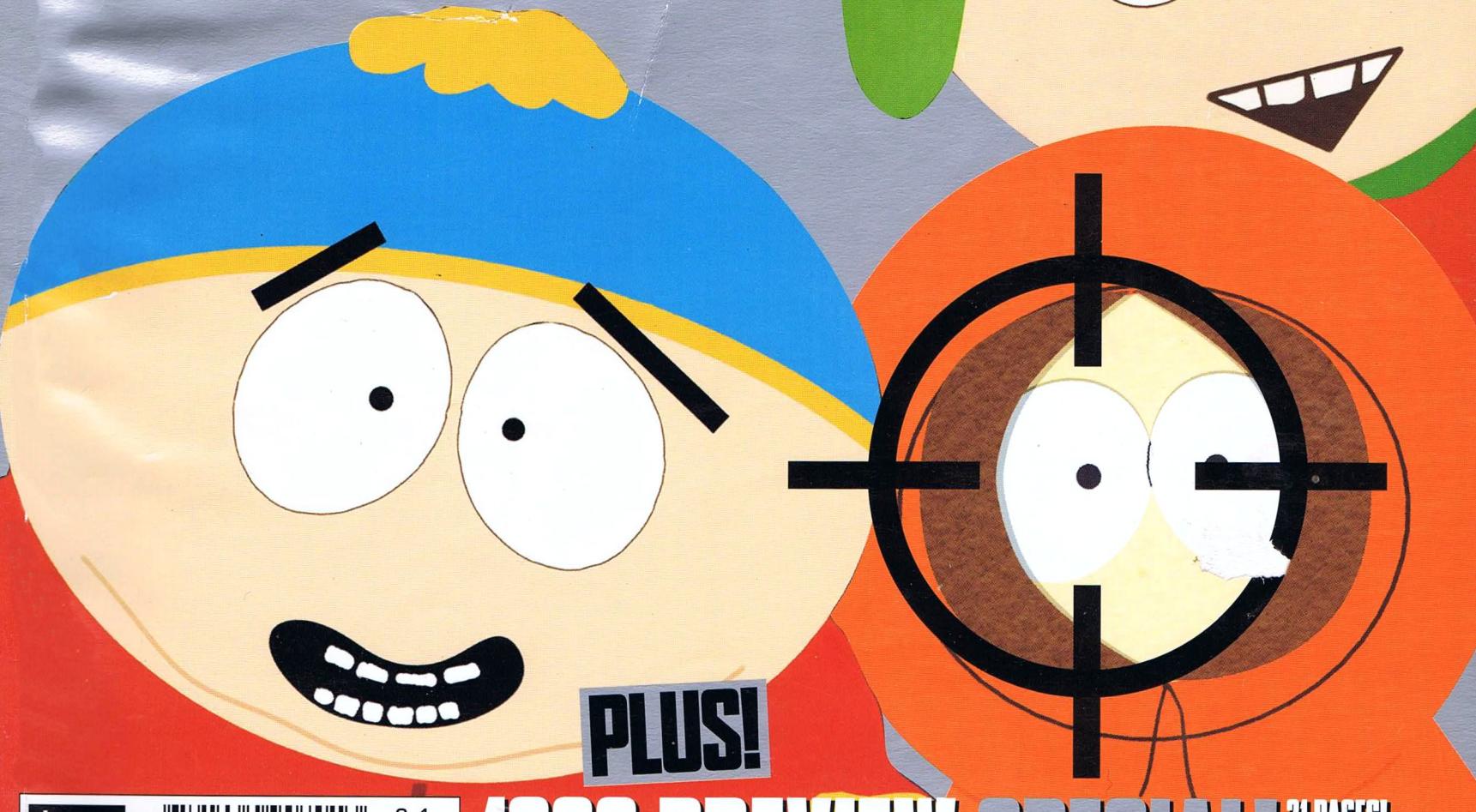
THINGS JUST GOT WORSE FOR KENNY....

SOUTH PARK

TV'S STOOPIDEST SHOW BECOMES
1999'S CRUELEST SHOOT-'EM-UP

180
pages of

Nell McAndrew
Half-Life
Zelda 64
Crash Bandicoot 3
FIFA 99
Michael Owen's WLS '99
Buying your own coin-op



PLUS!

1999 PREVIEW SPECIAL! 21 PAGES!
99 GAMES!
IT'S A MONSTER!

"Lara's back and looking better than ever."

PC Zone

"Bigger, faster and more challenging than either of the previous games... the new Tomb Raider is the best of the lot."

Ultimate PC

"Tomb Raider III will be absolutely brilliant... might just be the best Raider yet."

Official PlayStation Magazine

"Lara Croft shoots for a Hat Trick and scores."

Play

"Tomb Raider III more than matches up to the previous efforts and could even turn out to be THE Tomb Raider."

PlayStation Power

It's too
but I
be

CORE

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better

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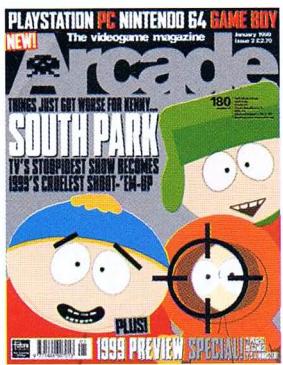
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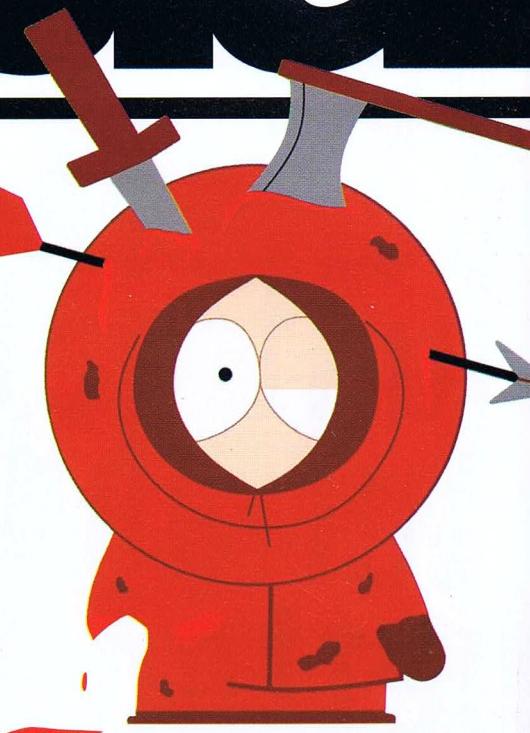
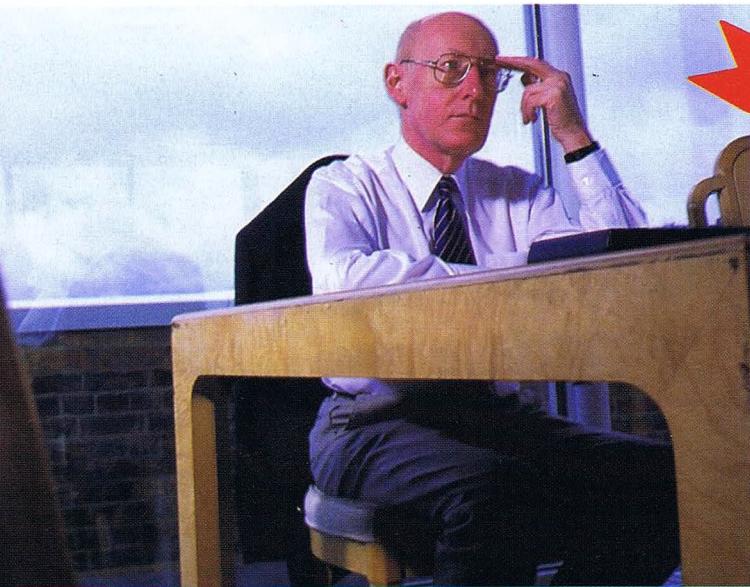


Issue two

January

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The all-time Arcade hero talks electric planes, rubber-keyed computers, and pulling birds the Sinclair way. (Okay, not really.)



62 Half-Life: the full story

Behind the scenes of Valve Software's brand new PC first-person shooter. Get out of the way, Quake. Clear off, Unreal. Half-Life's coming through...



68 Games Night

We snowboard from the comfort of our living room. No damaged bones, just broken egos.



32 South Park

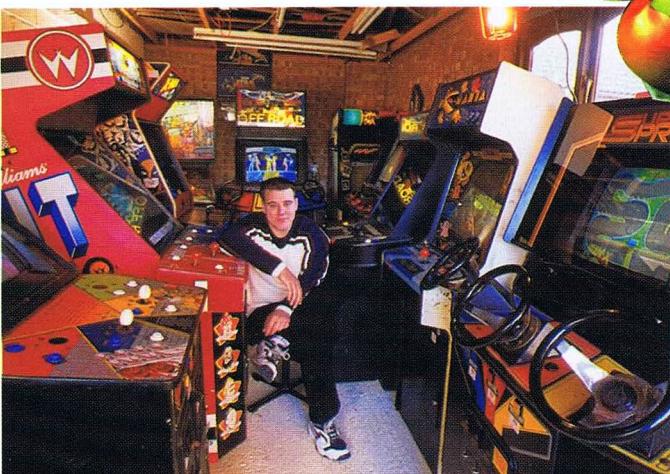
We look at the completed N64 version, the upcoming PC and PlayStation models, and talk to the game's designer. Plus, South Park: A Beginner's Guide, and TV show creator Trey Parker speaks!

GIANT PREVIEW

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99 FOR '99

A 21-pages on 99 of the very best games heading our way in the year to come. From Ridge Racer Type 4 to R-Type Delta, from Max Payne to Mystical Ninja 2, it's all here.



48 House of Games

Ever fancied owning your very own coin-op? We have – and having seen just how incredibly cheap it can be, we're sorely tempted. Join us for an all-inclusive 10-page buyer's guide, including what to look for, what you should pay, and where to get 'em. Plus: three experts speak.



96 Kick Ass

12 pages designed to make you – yes, you! – better at games. We have a six-page guide to the new Crash 3. We have TOCA 2, NHL Blitz, Body Harvest, and Cool Boarders 3, plus many more. It's the gaming equivalent of a Charles Atlas muscle course!

Play 99



Arcade

The videogame magazine

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A Review

The Ultimate Game Buyer's Guide

110 New PlayStation Games

New releases: All Star Tennis, Apocalypse, Asteroids, Bust-A-Move 4, Constructor, Crash Bandicoot 3, Invasion, Knockout Kings '99, NBA Live '99, Psybadek, Small Soldiers, and four big name football games (including Actua Soccer 3, FIFA 99 and the fantastic new Michael Owen game) go head-to-head in our first ever Group Test.

Import games: Xenogears on test.

Platinum budget games: The Lost World heads the (very small scale) charge.

124 New PC Games

New releases: Carmageddon 2, Football World Manager, Gangsters, Grim Fandango, Half-Life, King's Quest: Masks of Eternity, Madden NFL 99, Microsoft Combat Flight Sim, Powerslide, Railroad Tycoon II, Shogo, Sin, Thief, The Dark Project, Trespasser, Wargasm.

Budget games: Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain, Dark Reign, and UFO: Enemy Unknown, plus many, many more.

138 New N64 Games

New releases: Bust-A-Move 3, Extreme G 2, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, NBA Jam '99, Rakuga Kids, SCARS, South Park, V-Rally 64, WipEout 64 and more.

150 Other Systems

Coin-ops: Gauntlet Legends battles it out with Ocean Hunter.

Game Boy: More Color games, including

Mortal Kombat 4, NFL Blitz, Rampage World Tour and Tetris DX.

Mac: Tomb Raider II arrives (yes, a year late).

152 Internet

The rights and tempting wrongs of MAME explored, plus the very best web sites and a fantastic Star Wars CD-ROM of the Month.

154 Game Accessories

More in the way of steering wheels, joysticks, light guns and multi-player adaptors, plus the latest PlayStation cheat cartridge on test.

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Enemy of the State, Meet Joe Black, The Seige and the quite remarkable What Dreams May Come.

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Sliding Doors, Big Lebowski to rent; Excess Baggage to buy.

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Great Xmas presents, in the form of 007 and Rolling Stone picture books.

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New CDs from The Black Crowes, Black Star Liner, and South Park.

160 Games & Gadgets

Loads of great DING stuff, and a board game about pirates.

Every issue

More than just game reviews...

12 Game On

If it's happening in gaming, it's happening in here. This month: GoldenEye sweeps the BAFTAs, new Star Wars games, and (yes!) Thresh gets thrashed at Quake II.

16 Special Report

The Best and Worst of 1998

Join us for a complete end-of-term report on the year just gone. (It's A-plus for Sony of course, but how did the rest of the class do?)

20 Coming Soon

Games to keep an eye out for, including Kensei: Sacred Fist, Devil Dice, Max Power Racing and Total Annihilation: Kingdoms. This is a specially truncated version of Coming Soon, to make room for our 1999 Preview Special.

26 Games Insider

Our gaming experts reunite: from San Francisco, Tokyo and (er) Bath they come. But they all know exactly what they think – and aren't afraid to share it either.

28 Virtual Fox

She might be called Daisy, but she ain't no shrinking violet. Body Harvest's hottest dye-haired alien-basher does the whole centre-fold thing.

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40 Nell McAndrew

The current real-life Lara talks rubber knickers, damp patches, and generally shares herself. Sigh. By Matt Bielby

EDITORIAL

Out with the old...



**With
Matt Bielby,
Editor-in-Chief**

Welcome to the second issue of *Arcade* – and our very first giant-sized preview of an entire year's worth of games. 1999 is already shaping up to be very exciting indeed: there's the European launch of Dreamcast (and all the great software that'll come with it); there's Game Boy Color coming up to speed; there's news of PlayStation 2 on its way; and, of course, a whole raft of incredibly promising games coming for every system and across every genre. It's these that "99 for '99", our 21-page megapreview starting on page 74, concentrates on. If this doesn't get you itching to spend your Christmas money, I don't know what will.

But you don't have to wait until 1999 for great new games. After all, there'll be few next or any year to match the likes of *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* – Shigeru Miyamoto's latest, and many argue greatest, ground-breaker – or N64, or the stunning new first-person PC shooter *Half-Life*. Both are reviewed this issue, while we also look at the making of *Half-Life* on page 63 (*Zelda*, you may remember, was covered last issue).

On a slightly sadder note (for me, anyway), this is my last issue on *Arcade*. I've got a number of other projects lined up for '99 (things that may well see me spending some time in Japan and Germany, which I'm looking forward to), but I doubt that they'll quite make up for not being part of this magazine during the most exciting period of its life, its first year. For *Arcade*, this is the very beginning – at time of writing, we don't even have a proper handle on how many copies we sold of issue 1 – but the response so far, from gamers, from the games industry, from everyone, has been phenomenal. Thanks to everyone who's written in – it's very much appreciated.

Happily, I'm leaving the magazine in good hands. Neil West will be completely running the show from next issue, and he's got exciting plans – I've seen some of the stuff he's got lined up for the months to come, and it's all top-notch. I hope you'll stick around. As a reader, I know I will.

A

Matt Bielby
Outgoing Editor-in-Chief

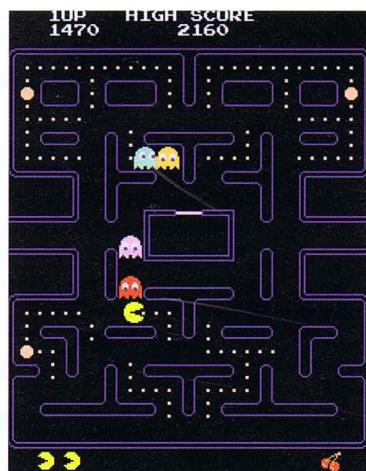
Rants & Raves

Letters entertain you! Or so it would seem; we've received enough of them. Looks like it's time to turn the magazine over to you lot...

Thanks for all the positive feedback from *Arcade* 1. At the end of the day we made this magazine for you, the readers, and so it's great to hear that so many of you bought it – and like it. It's good to know that you're a demanding lot, too. Mixed in with all the letters of praise, there've been plenty that have taken us to task for all and sundry, just like there should be. Are we biased against Sega? (We don't think so, but some of you do.) What's our policy on covering PlayStation 2? And just who is *Arcade* aimed at? All these questions and more are touched on over the next three pages. We don't always claim to have come up with the definitive answers to them all, but it's nice that we've got the debate going already. In the meantime, if you've got something to say, be sure to drop us a line. Our address is at the bottom of the page.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Coin-op Classics



Pac-Man: well, would you pay for it?

The main point of this letter is about MAME, which as you lot will know stands for Multi Arcade Machine Emulator. It's a program that you can download from the Internet which enables your PC to mimic the hardware of most old coin-ops. Using it, you can play "arcade-perfect" versions of old classics at home, for free, using the original code.

My problem is this: I'm really annoyed with the likes of Taito and Namco, and the way they've been getting mega-cheesed off at the people who set up MAME internet sites packed with old coin-op ROMs. They've even had a lot of them shut down, which I think is a bit stupid, really. I mean, how much money can the developers or publishers be making off crap like *Pac-Man* these days? After all, those Namco retro packs for the PlayStation usually bomb, because hardly anyone is going to pay £40 to play old arcade games any more (and it's not as if they put any of the good ones on those CDs anyway). So why don't they just turn a blind eye and let these sites continue? Without them, their games would pretty much bomb into obscurity; with them, they're kept alive for further generations to play.

Frank Wheatman, Edinburgh

You make the case for MAME well. It's a complicated issue, and our gut reaction is to agree – but there's no denying that companies such as Taito and Namco should have the right to decide what happens to their own games. MAME is discussed twice in this issue, in the "House of Games" feature on page 48, and in the Internet column on 152.

**Write to us at
*Arcade***

■ Tell us what you think!

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The writer of the best letter each month receives an exclusive *Arcade* T-shirt. Here's what they look like, as modelled by our very own lovely Lisa.

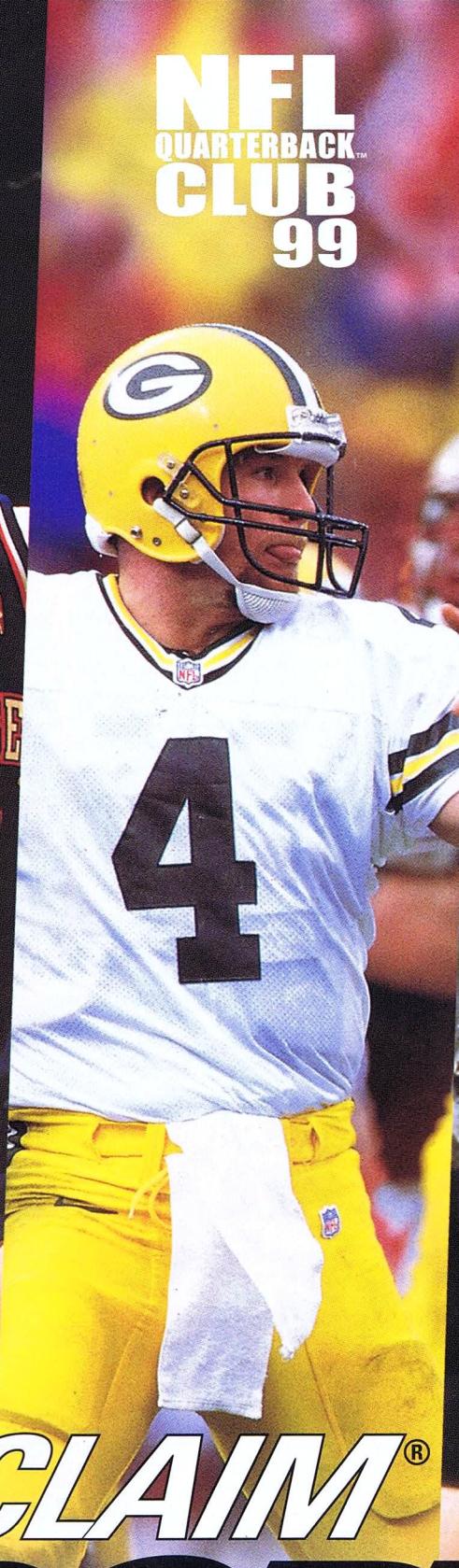


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Rants & Raves²

On the side

I just thought I'd drop you a line to let you all know how much I like the new mag. I particularly enjoyed the feature on what games were about in 1984 and the Q&A piece on Matthew Smith. Hopefully this will become a regular for all your older readers. I'd be interested to know what happened to Eugene Evans of Imagine.

Noel Wallace, East Kilbride

Great magazine – good to see all you ex-YS peeps aren't on the streets. And good to have a magazine that finally takes retro seriously. I've added a mention of the mag to my news page, which, ooh, should be worth at least two extra sales. Hurrah.

Mat Simpson, via e-mail

I want to write and apologise to Nell McAndrew, the Lara Croft model, through your magazine. I met her at a *Tomb Raider* promotion at KMS in Huntingdon. I was getting her autograph and I accidentally held her hand. It was a mistake! Sorry, Nell!

Daniel Grifton, Peterborough

Just thought you'd like to know that in your list of "Ten Sports Sims That You'll Never See" (Arcade 1, page 57) you say that the fine, manly sport of caber tossing has never actually been represented in a videogame. However, I recall spending hours and hours fruitlessly trying to beat the world-record Caber Toss on my old Commodore 64 version of ENIX's excellent *World Games*. It was great, featuring such other off-beat sports as Sumo Wrestling and Kendo.

Grant Gilmour, Dunoon



■ Sega's Dreamcast: we can't wait for it. No, honestly, we really can't.

Sega bias?

I read with interest your views on Sega's Dreamcast in *Arcade 1*, and feel it may be somewhat premature to judge the performance of the system until it enters its second generation of software. I am expecting delivery of my import machine in two weeks, and I'm confident that I won't be disappointed!

Publications such as yours should be supporting the system because, as you have rightly pointed out, Sega has contributed much to the industry and still has a lot to offer. Also, it would be healthy to have a strong Dreamcast as competition to the existing machines. After all, healthy competition tends to encourage great software, as developers for rival systems strive to outdo each other. Remember when the Mega Drive and SNES were battling it out on an even playing field? We saw some great games because of that.

David Anderson, via e-mail

I know this is only my personal view, but I found the coverage surrounding Dreamcast in your first issue somewhat unbalanced. Luckily for me, I have already seen and played *Sonic Adventure* myself, and to say that parts of the game look not too far removed from top PlayStation and N64 titles is plainly incorrect. Also, statements to the effect that Dreamcast is not the leap forward in gaming that previous machines were seems a bit premature at this point, seeing as it's yet to be released! Besides, titles such as *Sonic* are first-wave titles and graphically the games will improve with time, as titles on the PlayStation have.

John Bright, via e-mail

I was deeply disappointed with the barely-disguised anti-Sega tone of your magazine. You ignore the Saturn almost completely, even though both the console and its games are still available. You fail to mention Saturn versions of games such as *Resident Evil* or *Tomb Raider*. And by ignoring the widespread and healthy second hand trade in consoles and games gave a misleading idea of which consoles offer the best value.

Coverage of Dreamcast was similarly skewed. Few consoles are launched with their best games, as PlayStation and Saturn showed. The Dreamcast games you commented on are not in their finished states, but merely demos. And you claim that Dreamcast is not the great leap forward that you expected, but what were you expecting exactly? The question is, where do we go from here? Especially as PlayStation 2 and Dreamcast will be technologically almost identical.

Besides, it's not great games that sell consoles, it's great marketing. After all, out of the PlayStation, Saturn and N64, there are probably around ten really great games for each system. And there's no doubt that the most original games are on Saturn and N64. I own all three of these consoles, and it is only when you have access to more

than one machine that you can break the slavish corporate loyalty that these hardware companies try to foster.

Craig Smith, Bristol

Arcade has no bias against Sega. We reviewed just one Sega game in *Arcade 1* (*SpikeOut*, a coin-op) and gave it five stars. We said, "Sega's AM2 coin-op division is the best in the world... no one – not even Namco – comes close." As for Dreamcast, we called it like we see it. It's a great new system ("it is good, very good", wrote Neil West), but from what we've seen so far it's not the same quantum leap forward that PlayStation, Nintendo 64 or the Super NES were. Yes, of course the games will improve over time. But time isn't something Sega has a lot of. If you believe that Dreamcast will be technologically comparable to PlayStation 2 then you're fooling yourself. Sega has just a year – maybe only 18 months – to make it big with Dreamcast before Sony's new machine arrives. And no, we haven't seen it, but you'd have to be very naive to bet against Sony making it a winner.

To address the other points raised, sure – rarely do systems launch with their best games. Oh, except Nintendo 64, of course. And yes, the games shown at TGS were demos. But with launch only six weeks away, they won't improve dramatically. This said, in the case of *Sonic Adventure*, we acknowledged that the game wasn't finished and credited Yuji Naka's *Sonic Team* with, "having pulled off some pretty impressive feats in the past". We want Dreamcast to succeed. You're right, healthy competition is good for everyone.

Craig, you contradict yourself at the last minute. You can't seriously claim that Saturn matches PlayStation in terms of quality games! And as for exactly what we want from a next generation system? There's no exact answer. It's a bit like pornography – it's hard to define exactly what it is. But you know it when you see it.



■ Jonathan Davies: still writing, still the most dryly funny man alive.

Games Night

Well done, you lot. It's like the best bits of *Your Sinclair*, *N64 Magazine* and *SFX* rolled into one. Hurrah, etc. The Games Night feature is excellent – so excellent that I didn't let the fact that your consoles didn't have any power leads attached to them ruin the illusion for me! State of Play was also great. By the way, what contribution did Jonathan Davies make? I've been wanting to know what he's been doing since leaving *N64 Magazine*.

John Starkey, via e-mail

Jonathan wrote the excellent feature on *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. He'll be writing plenty more for us in the future – and hopefully next time he'll get a credit!

Arcade

Issue two

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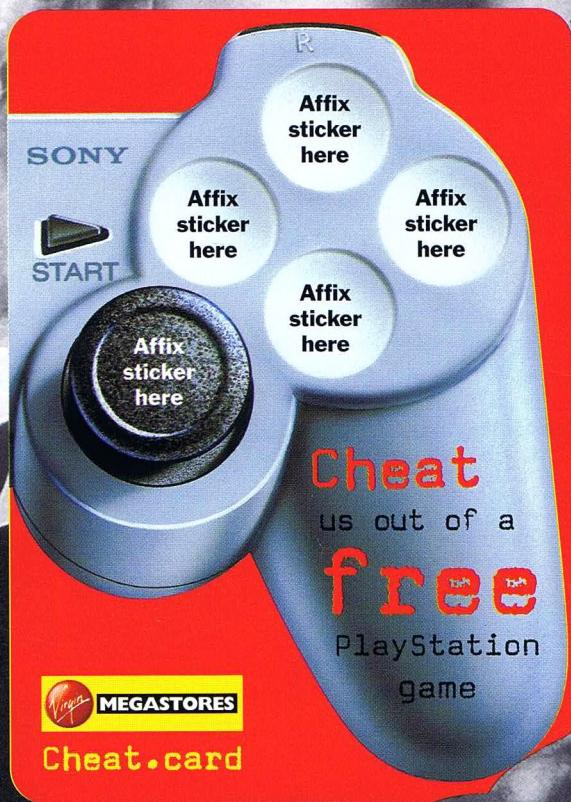
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Rants & Raves

3

Best of British

Living here in England, as I do, and being quite accustomed to companies such as Psygnosis, Codemasters, DMA Design and Bullfrog coming out with stunning and often highly original games with each offering, I allow myself to believe that we here in Britain have more than our fair share of the world's finest games designers. America and Europe needn't even exist as far as my games collection goes.

Of course, I could never be so bold as to say that we are ranked higher than Japan in these stakes, but I frequently think we are a good second. But how close to the truth am I? Few magazines give any indication as to the country of origin of games, so I rarely know if the really cool looking game I am reading about is of Scottish descent, or whether it comes from Papua New Guinea.

So I turn to you to put me right. In your first issue you said that the top ten designers included four Japanese guys, four Americans and two British folks ("Move over, Quentin!", *Arcade* 1, page 95). But I don't think I'd quite go along with that. I'd probably place Peter Molyneux and David Jones higher up in the list. Perhaps to shut me up once and for all you could have a longer feature analysing which are the best games making countries in the world.

"Focus", Birmingham

Britain boasts some of the world's best game designers, absolutely. We'll be running a more comprehensive gaming "who's who" in a later issue.

PlayStation 2

I've just picked up a copy of *Arcade*, and it's excellent, fab, brill. With so many game magazines on the shelves, it's nice to see something new to keep people's interest going. One request – please try and keep us up to date with all PlayStation 2 news.

Simon Thackray, Leeds

I liked the first issue, but I do have a little niggle. Your contributors. You bang on about PlayStation 2 all the bloody time. It's not happening. It's not big, and it certainly ain't funny. Even *Official PlayStation Magazine* (the first who, as I can see, would wish to frighten other companies with, "We'll get you big next Christmas, when we launch THIS...") admits that these are just unfounded rumours. In an interview, even Ken Kutaragi – the inventor of PlayStation himself – says no. He say (in best tribal accent), "No PSX2 in mind. None in brain box. PSX Mk1 doing fine." He is in no way planning, let alone already designing a PSX2. He said it. Not me, him.

Matt Howes, via e-mail

Of course *PlayStation 2* is happening. It's in Sony's best interests, however, to keep talk of it as low-key as possible – after all, the company is still trying to sell as many original *PlayStations* as possible. That's why good, solid *PlayStation 2* news is still pretty thin on the ground, though we'll round-up the story so far next issue.

Well-thumbed

At last, I thought, a magazine that covers the Game Boy! I have an old, well-thumbed



■ Moon Patrol: one of the first, fairly "uninspiring" Game Boy Color releases.

copy of *Total!* which has a two page summary of Game Boy offerings, but there have been many new releases since that magazine folded, and hardly anywhere to read about them. I enjoyed your review of the new Game Boy Color, and I can't wait to get hold of one, but where's the software? I'll pass on the four uninspiring games you covered in your first issue – I'd like to know if there's any good new software coming out. Keep up the good work, but please review more Game Boy titles, and put a lot more in your A-List too, please!

Kevin Porter, via e-mail

Bite-sized chunks

Well done on creating a truly entertaining and enjoyable first issue of *Arcade*. I must admit, with the current plethora of gaming mags around I approached *Arcade* with some hesitation, but I'm pleased to say I was very pleasantly surprised. You seem to be aiming the magazine at a slightly older age range than most (I'm 35, so I guess I really do qualify), and the features and standard of writing reflect this, as does the excellent graphic design throughout. How the hell did you manage to cram so much into the magazine? I can only hope this is an aspiration you have for all future issues: I generally read my magazines in bite-size chunks and it's gratifying to know that *Arcade* currently represents a full month of snacking.

Phil Ford, South London

We're not aiming for an older audience per se, but rather for all gamers who want to be neither patronised nor bamboozled with technical irrelevancies. We hope to have the first word on the new stuff, the last word on the old and – perhaps above all – to remain a damn good read.

Britannic verses

First, let me congratulate you on a very original, full and excellent value magazine. I was very surprised to read about the reaction your imaginary game *Britannia Rules* got from the games industry ("Smack my pitch up", *Arcade* 1, page 17). I must admit, I thought it was a great idea and was looking forward to you telling me that it was in development!

As a long-time strategy fan and British by birth, English by the grace of God, this is just the sort of game that appeals to me...

Terry Osborne, Portsmouth

This letter went downhill quickly from this point.

CONTRIBUTORS

Amongst the sorry bunch of reprobates responsible for *Arcade* this month...



Robin Alway

Thinking we might need a female influence to prevent our regular Games Night outing from degenerating into the petty squabbling that brought the last feature to a premature (and messy) close, Robin was persuaded to bring his other half, Andrea, to the party this time round. "She's quite good at games, so I wasn't sure I wanted her along," he now admits. "After all, Rich in particular would have made my life hell if she'd beaten me at anything." And did she? "I'm not saying. If she did, I've conveniently forgotten. She's disturbingly good at *1080°*." In the corner, Rich Pelley sniggers to himself, quietly.

Game of the moment: *Zelda 64* on N64: "I'm generally scared of horses, so I'm loving the horsey bits in *Ocarina of Time*. All the excitement, none of the fear."



Sam Richards

This month, staff writer Sam's been struggling with the giant "99 for '99" preview feature – a nightmare of information gathering, picture taking, and trying to pick which of the great games coming our way over the next 12 months get a

mention, and which ones don't. "I'm incredibly impressed by what little I've seen of Rare's line-up for '99," he confesses, "and *Galleon* looks incredibly promising too, but it's Dreamcast that's really got me going. Some people are already sounding a little non-plussed by it all, which seems ridiculous to me. I mean, if only for the return of *Sonic*, Dreamcast has to be a good thing. I reckon gaming's been a lot poorer for him being away."

Game of the moment: *NBA Live '99* on PlayStation: "It's a classy sport sim – and I don't even like basketball."



Simon Kirrane

Last month Simon ran our inaugural Games Night. This month, he's kept with the gaming-in-the-living-room theme by investigating the possibilities of bringing a genuine arcade machine home with you. Turns out it's

a lot cheaper, and more practical, than he'd ever thought possible. "I'm really tempted myself," he says. "I reckon I can afford £300, maybe £350, and for that something like a *Street Fighter II* machine might be on the cards. The only problem is, I've recently moved and don't know where to put the damn thing. Plus, the girlfriend wouldn't be happy. But I'm working on her."

Game of the moment: *Tenchu* on PlayStation: "It's not really long enough, but it's got all that sneaking about stuff, making it like a preview of *Metal Gear Solid*."



Nick Moyle

Nick is *Arcade*'s art editor, responsible for the lovely-looking pages you're holding in your hands. He comes to us from our sister mag *Total Football*, and describes the differences between the two magazines thus: "It's

great working with some of the really detailed, rendered artwork we get here on *Arcade* – it's much easier to make a beautiful illustration look nice than some out-of-focus shot of a GM Vauxhall Conference player. And I've really enjoyed things like the coin-op feature this month. That said, thinking of something interesting to do with yet another picture of a dull, grey *PlayStation* can be a bit of a challenge."

Game of the moment: *ISS '98* on PlayStation: "I average a little bit less than a goal a game, but I still think it's the best football sim by far."

Arcade exit poll

Arcade

■ We need to know what you like and don't like in the mag. Please fill out this form (or simply copy it on to a bit of paper) when you write to *Arcade*.

The best bits this issue:

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

I didn't like _____

Arcade 2



Arcade 1, page 17).

I must admit, I thought it was a great idea and was looking forward to you telling me that it was in development! As a long-time strategy fan and British by birth, English by the grace of God, this is just the sort of game that appeals to me...

Terry Osborne, Portsmouth

This letter went downhill quickly from this point.



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GAME

The world of videogames: we take you round the globe in four pages



AWARDS REPORT

Nobody does it better

GoldenEye wins "Best Game" BAFTA | Statuette "astonishingly heavy"

By Sam Richards

Early on in 1998, BAFTA (the British Academy of Film and Television Arts) announced that it would be welcoming videogames and the other forms of interactive entertainment into its fold. This was, of course, good news. It was another step towards mainstream legitimacy for videogames. It meant the London-based luvvies who infest Britain's arts media wouldn't be able to turn their noses up – at least, not quite so high – at our "low brow" medium.

Perhaps more importantly, it meant a slap-up awards dinner with tuxedos and free wine for the movers and shakers of the UK games scene. Somehow, Arcade's Neil West and Sam Richards also got to go.

On Thursday, 29 October 1998, London's Intercontinental Hotel held the inaugural BAFTA Interactive Entertainment Awards dinner. Hosted by Stephen "as smooth as a freshly buttered chorister" Fry, and with Lord Puttnam handing out the trophies, the gaming world waited to see who would walk away with the glory. For "Best Game" category, the nominations were GT Interactive's Abe's Oddysee, Frontier Development's V2000

and Rare's GoldenEye 007. As part of the judging committee – alongside other gaming luminaries including Populous creator Peter Molyneux and representatives from DMA Design, Red Dog Games, and Sub Culture maker Criterion Software – Neil sat with a knowing smile on his face as the winner was announced. But then, to be honest, no one was too surprised when GoldenEye 007 was announced as the big champ.



Hosts were Stephen "as smooth as a buttered chorister" Fry and Lord Puttnam

Its developer, Rare, also won the "Best British Developer" award, so bosses Tim and Chris Stamp now have a dinky little gold mask each. Watch out for them next Hallowe'en. ("We done won some more!" chummily brags Rare's Web site at <http://www.rare.co.uk/>. And few would argue that they deserved it.)

Of course, two awards do not an entire evening make, and the rest of the night was taken up



with recognition for assorted interactive CD-ROMs, Web sites and similar; none of which need concern us here. The general consensus afterwards was that, though BAFTA recognition is obviously A Very Good Thing, future ceremonies will have to offer up rather more game related categories than a near-solitary two. Certainly, when you compare the importance of games over CD-ROMs in any terms you care to mention – sales, say, or technical ability displayed – further recognition is needed.

Still, it was a good start. And the prawn with avocado appetisers were divine.

A

HOT NEW GAMES

Star Wars: big film, big game

LucasArts confirms "new games" | Film frenzy

By Neil West

■ 1999 will, of course, be the year of *Star Wars: Episode One: The Phantom Menace* opens in the US on May 21st, with the UK release following in June. Anticipation is already reaching frenzied levels. When the film's trailer was first screened in the US on 20 November, cinemas were sold out countrywide – with many leaving before the main feature started! Similarly, the Internet ground to a halt

when postings of videotaped recordings of the two minute teaser prompted a download frenzy. Things have calmed a tad since: catch it for yourself at www.starwars.com.

And with the film will come games. PlayStation, N64 and PC titles based on *Episode One* are currently in development, with LucasArts remaining typically tight-lipped about content, even refusing to comment on whether or not Nintendo has an exclusive arrangement to release its N64 version ahead

of other systems, as has been reported. More will be learned in February.

Meanwhile, *Rogue Squadron* for PC and N64 is released in January (it's a shooter set in the time between *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*). Then in the summer comes *X-wing Alliance* for the PC (see page 92). May the force... no, sorry, I really can't bring myself to say it. **A**

Sam Richards' World of Games



Now they're calling it PlayStation 2000

■ With Sony still coming on all unforthcoming with news of PlayStation 2, conjecture regarding what it will be like and when we'll see it is spreading like wildfire, fuelled by more leaks than a St David's Day parade. PlayStation 2000 is the latest – though, we feel, unlikely – guess at the machine's final title, suggesting that we won't see the thing until the millennium year. Supposedly, a number of Japanese developers have already received basic hardware in order to begin software creation. "The funny things is, Sega don't know just how stuffed they are," is one comment filtered back to Arcade. We'll have more on PlayStation 2000 next issue.

Boycott stumped

■ Following the recent Geoff Boycott court case, and his conviction for beating his ex-lover, Sony has retired from its association with the famous Yorkshire cricketer. The company is developing a game that was to be called – appropriated enough – *Geoff Boycott's Hit For Six*, but has understandably canned the endorsement (rumours that it's keeping the name aside for a new series of fighting games are unsubstantiated).

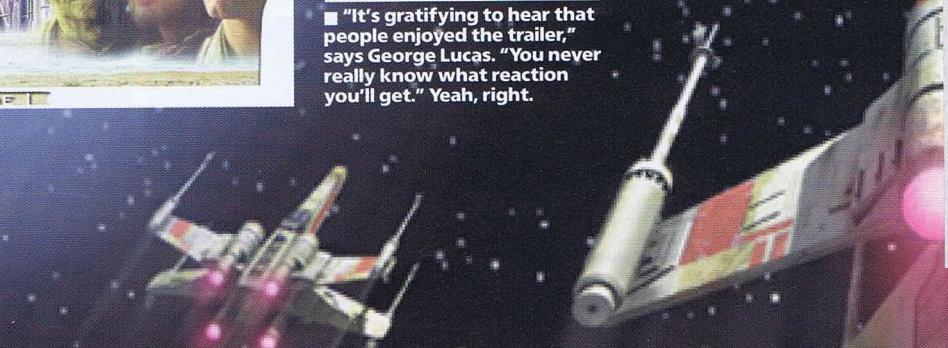
Fans of Boycott's no-nonsense commentary will still be able to hear him in Codemasters' *Brian Lara Cricket*, however.

The multi-event sports sim is back!

■ UK developer Attention To Detail – responsible for the excellent forthcoming race game *Rollcage* – is set to return us to the halcyon days of *Daley Thompson's Decathlon* with the creation of an all-formats release to tie-in with the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games. The whole gamut of sporting disciplines is to be represented – from shot putt to hurdles – each with its own distinctive gameplay. Whether or not the winning technique for each event will be more than frantic joystick "wagging" or frenzied button "mashing" remains to be seen.

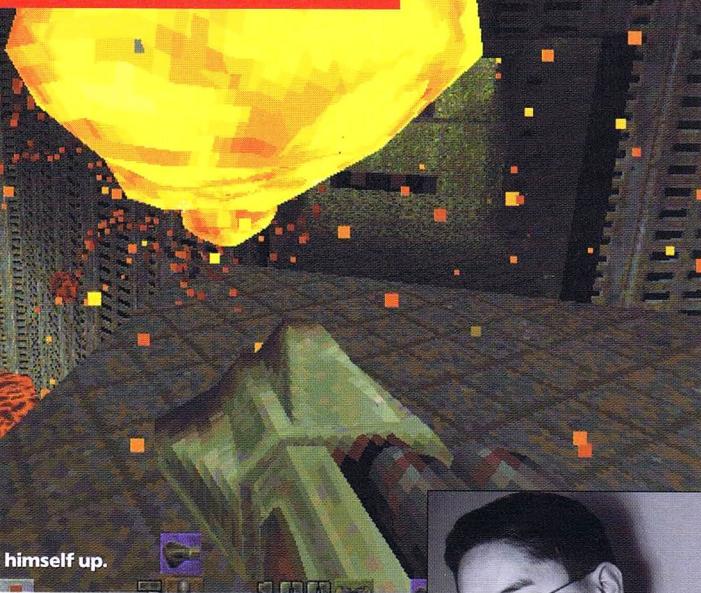


■ "It's gratifying to hear that people enjoyed the trailer," says George Lucas. "You never really know what reaction you'll get." Yeah, right.



GAME ON

The world of video games: we take you round the globe in four pages



Doh! Thresh blows himself up.

SMACK DOWN



Thresh thrashed

Immortal makes reigning champ "his bitch" | Then gets annihilated

By Neil West

The US Professional Gamer's League drew to an end in late November, with champion Dennis "Thresh" Fong once again winning the final. His victory wasn't without controversy, however, as in one of the early rounds he was soundly whipped 10 to 1 by "Immortal" after a 20 minute game on the Quake II map "Frag Pipe". He was thus forced to play his way through the "Best Losers"

round to continue in the tournament, but went on to successfully defend his crown, annihilating Immortal 8 to 3, then 43 to 0 to win. Convincing stuff.

But it's his earlier loss that everyone's talking about.

A step-by-step anatomy of the smack-down is shown below. Essentially, he was out-played by an opponent who knew the level inside-out and was merciless in tracking down his foe. Switching between the Railgun, Rocket Launcher and Super Shotgun, Immortal continuously guarded the Yellow Armour areas, making sure Thresh had very little chance

to get into the game.

The early action revealed a seemingly nervous Thresh, who – after going behind by a few frags – missed some important jumps and became holed-up in the level's dead-end areas. Immortal nearly lost his cool after somehow managing to fall into the lava on a number of occasions, bringing the score back to a tie. Yet the challenger's persistence with containing tactics and, later, his superb accuracy with the difficult-to-use Railgun, saw him dominate the game's last five minutes. Thresh's final humiliation was losing a couple of frags by accidentally blowing himself up with the Rocket Launcher.

Immortal became one of the few people ever to have beaten Thresh at his own game – but his victory was short lived. "If someone uses a good move on me I'll be one step ahead next time he tries it on," Thresh told Arcade last month. It seems he wasn't joking.

A

"I wasn't in good form"

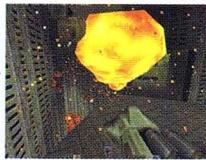
It's not every day that Thresh loses. He's won over \$100,000 in prize money and a Ferrari as the world's best Quake player. So what happened this time? Over to the man himself...

"That first game versus Immortal, I was a little bit out of it." Yeah, why? "Having launched my new website a few days earlier, I was busy with that and didn't get a chance to prepare as much as I would have liked to for the tourney. In addition, I got lucky and drew – randomly – a bye for the first round, which I didn't want." Why not? Surely getting a bye is a

bonus? "You'd think that, but it meant that my first match of the tourney was a tough one against Immortal, and I had no chance to get into the tourney mindset."

OK, so what happened when you faced him? "He played an awesome game, but I wasn't playing in good form." And then, in the finals? "The second time around, I was prepared. I practiced a lot the nights leading up to the finals, and when the time came around, I was mentally ready."

Inspiring stuff. Thresh's website is at (<http://www.firingsquad.com/>).



1 All pictures from Thresh's position. Thresh got off to a reasonable start, exchanging early frags with Immortal with the Rocket Launcher.



2 It was neck and neck for almost ten minutes, Immortal keeping himself in the game with good use of the Railgun. Stalemate so far.



3 Much of the early game was played out in the high, open area as both players jockeyed for position with tentative Railgun shots.



4 Immortal seemed to have a better grasp of the level's architecture, and often pinned Thresh down with rockets fired from above.



5 As soon as Immortal realised Thresh's position, he holed him in with a steady stream of rockets, earning at least four frags in quick succession.



6 Thresh resorted to travelling through the lava trap to collect the Hyper Blaster, but Immortal was making regular kills, stretching his lead to 7-2.



7 Thresh appeared to have the upper-hand for a few moments, as Immortal fell to a well-placed rocket...



8 ...but Thresh threw away two frags with carelessly-timed rocket shots, taking the score back down to 10-1.



9 Thresh tried frantically to find Immortal in the dying moments of the match, but had to concede defeat with the seconds slipping away.



10 The final scores revealed Immortal's accuracy was way ahead of Thresh's. The champ had been beaten at last.

Smack my pitch up

Arcade tests the limits of industry patience with "creative" game ideas

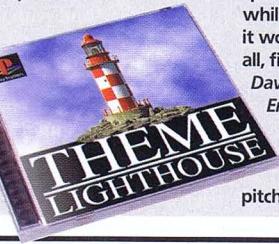
No. 2 Theme Lighthouse

The pitch: Take control of an isolated lighthouse in one of a range of lovingly-simulated locations (including Rockall, Shetland and Land's End) and make important real-time decisions. Use the controls to turn your main light on or off, warning ships of the dangerous rocks ahead. If they crash, you could be in trouble! You lose points for lost vessels, lost lives and for causing oil slicks. Insider tip: keep an eye

on your window at all times. A picture of a seagull means it's day time, a black screen means it's night. Use this crucial information to guide your decisions. All the action takes place in real time, so there's plenty of long-term play. Controls: A, light on. B, light off. C, change bulb.

The response: "Actually, I quite like it. You could tie-in a great licensing deal with a wool supplier and introduce a "Learn to Knit" option during quiet points in the game. Then, in the stunning "Beardview" 3D bonus level, you could try staggering up the 200-step spiral staircase while drunk. I think it would sell – after all, fishing does."

David Perry, Shiny Entertainment



Next month: More pitches get slapped.

WEIRD STUFF

Start me up before you go go

Crazy on-line racing? Murray Walker wouldn't like it.

By Sam Richards

Yes, it's ridiculous, yes, it's Japanese, and yes, it looks like great fun.

Race meets are held once a day, while the courses are changed weekly. You only need an Internet browser to play, the madness taking place at <http://www.netgame.net>. Currently the site's in Japanese only, but an English-language version is promised soon.



Go on, try it.

■ Jason, Steve and Sara were first in the queue to pick up *Tomb Raider III* at the Bath's Pink Planet.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Lara's midnight rendezvous

Tomb Raider III goes on sale at midnight | "Gaming event of the year"

By Sam Richards

Reports indicate that *Tomb Raider III* is simply flying off the shelves, with no sign of the suggested backlash as yet. The PlayStation version of the game hit the shops on 20 November, with game stores around the country reporting booming sales thanks to the simultaneous launch of Lara's latest and

rival big-name title *FIFA 99* from EA Sports. Stores up and down the UK, including the Electronics Boutique on Oxford Street, staged midnight openings for the most die-hard fans, and the game has continued to sell well ever since.

Stores up and down the UK staged midnight openings for fans

"Most committed gamers had already had a chance to play demo versions, so they knew they were getting an improvement on *Tomb Raider II*," commented a EB spokesman. "We've also had plenty of new gamers coming in to buy the whole trilogy, so they can start from the beginning. The

Lara hype has got to everyone!" Similarly, Virgin Megastore in Bristol dubbed *Tomb Raider III*, "the biggest gaming event of the year", while Game also celebrated an influx of new gamers into its shop. Meanwhile, in Arcade's home town of Bath, Pink Planet Games gamely opened at midnight to receive a small but determined body of *Tomb Raider* fans. Around ten people were huddled outside, waiting for the doors to open, when Arcade arrived. All professed to be Lara fans. All left happy.



SHRINK RAP

Is videogame violence harmful?

Dr Mark Griffiths, our resident psychologist, gets stuck in.

In the eight years I've been researching the psychology of playing videogames, there's one question I've been asked again and again: does the constant playing of violent games make you a more aggressive person? You would think that such a hot issue would have already produced a skip-load of research findings, but no: in academic circles, it's something that has yet to be taken seriously.

But why? After all, the improved graphics of each new generation of game makes the depictions of violence more explicit, and at the same time society itself appears to be becoming more violent. You'd think it an issue worthy of investigation, whether there's a connection to be made or not.

Of course, it's not just games that come in the firing line. The accusation that watching violent acts affects viewers in a

negative way has been levelled at television and films for many years, and this is one area where there has been research, although none of it conclusive. But there is a further accusation levelled at videogames, and that is that playing violent videogames may, in fact, have a more adverse effect on children than television, because the child is actively involved in a game, as opposed to simply watching.

Psychologists who speculate that playing beat-'em-ups and shooters might have an effect on gamers base their thoughts on the predictions of two popular theories. First, Social Learning Theory says that children will imitate what they see on screen, and that playing aggressive videogames will thus lead to increases in aggressive behaviour. In direct contradiction to this, however, comes the

Catharsis Theory, which says that playing aggressive videogames has a relaxing effect, by channelling the built-up aggression of the players through the game itself. The one consistent finding seems to be that children under the age of eight do become more aggressive after playing or watching a violent game. However, even here there is plenty of debate, mostly on whether the procedures used to measure "aggression" are valid and reliable. So the best thing we can say at the moment, based on limited evidence, is that if violent games have any effect at all, it is most noticeable in young children. Not very satisfying, I know, but like I said, there's been surprisingly little work done in the area.

■ Dr Mark Griffiths lectures at Nottingham Trent University.

Super Mario panned!

Who's the hardest Nintendo character? Let's find out.

For years, certain gamers have been heavily campaigning for a chance to beat the crap out of Mario, Luigi and – grr! – Toad in some kind of fighting game. Nintendo has always dodged the issue, presumably in the belief that it would be unsavoury for characters so beloved of young children to be seen cheerfully roundhousing an opponent. (That they already whack each other with shells and jump on the heads of enemies seems to have been ignored.)

However, now it seems that Nintendo has had a change of heart and a Mario beat-'em-up for Nintendo 64 – is on the way snappily titled *Nintendo All-Star*.

Battle Royal Smash Brothers. There's no sign of Toad (shame) but it will feature Mario, Luigi, Donkey Kong, Yoshi, Link and Samus from Metroid "getting it on." The "Battle Royal" in question will not be a *Tekken*-style contest, but a crap scrap involving rather less physical contact and more in the way of projectiles and magical items, including fireflowers and striking fans.

Shigeru Miyamoto himself reassures: "It's not bloody at all. Instead, it's an enjoyable 'hitting' game like sumo in Japan, in which you have to force your

opponent out of a ring – or cage, in this case."

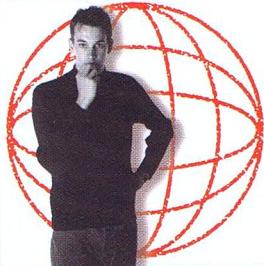
Each character will have his or her own special moves: Link, for instance, is handy with a sword or boomerang, while Yoshi can snare an enemy with his tongue and turn him into an egg!

Love Mario and you'll love *Smash Brothers*, hate Mario and at least you'll be able to have Donkey Kong give him a good licking. The game is scheduled for a spring release in Japan, with Europe to follow. We'll keep you posted.



■ Scratch his eyes out!

Sam Richards' World of Games



Competition for Game Boy

■ More details have emerged regarding Japanese toy giant Bandai's WonderSwan, a 16-bit hand-held console similar to, but slightly smaller than, Nintendo's 8-bit Game Boy Color. WonderSwan is only black-and-white, but has on its side an interesting screen configuration that enables you to play it portrait or landscape style – depending on what type of game you might be playing. The system also boasts games from the likes of Square and Namco (plus Sega, which Bandai now effectively owns), a screen resolution slightly better than Nintendo's original system, and (a key point, this) a pocket-money Japanese price that could be as low as £25.

Japanese release is scheduled for March '99, with no European launch in sight. Rumours that the console will double-up as a toilet cleaner are as yet unsubstantiated...

Street Smart

■ Dubbed as "snowboarding with wheels", the hot new craze of skateboarding (yes, I am being sarcastic) is set to have its first dedicated PlayStation title. *Street Skaters*, developed by Microcabin and published in the UK by EA, will feature park and street skating on a whole range of stunt and race courses, and will include over 200 groin-threatening tricks, 20 boards and eight riders. No UK release date has been set, but a spring launch seems likely.

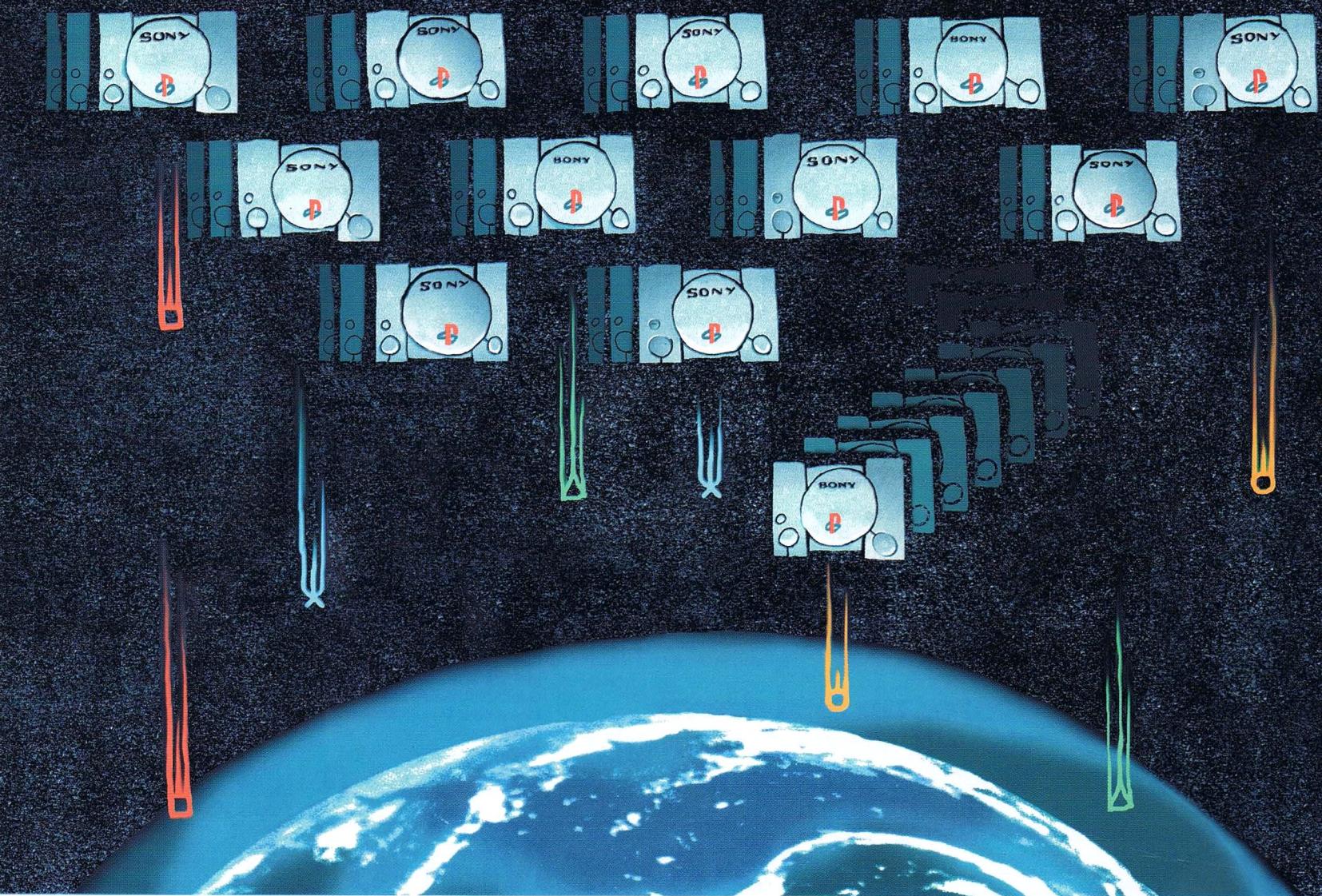
Beaten into submission

■ Wrestling games. They're a bit like Celine Dion records, really: nobody knows anyone who likes them, but there they are at the top of the charts, week after bloody week. I mean, do you own one? Really? I certainly don't.

Anyway, after an autumn in which *WWF: Warzone* and then *WCW/NWO Revenge* have hogged the top spot in the US game charts, THQ (publishers of the latter) has announced that it will be bringing characters such as Hulk Hogan and Stone Cold Steve Austin to both Dreamcast and PlayStation 2. Don't say I didn't warn you.

GAME ON

SPECIAL REPORT



NEWS ANALYSIS

The winners and the losers from 1998, gaming's biggest ever year

Full month-by-month analysis | PlayStation "bigger than Jesus"

By Dave Roberts

We're all gamers, right? At the end of the day, what matters to us is the quality of new games on offer. We care about the developers, sure, but only in so much as we want to know what they're doing next. We care about the different labels that games are released on, but only when it guarantees some degree of "quality" (like Nintendo, say, or EA Sports). And we care about the political machinations of the software industry not at all. Right?

Wrong. It's a sad fact of life that smart gamers, particularly console gamers, have to pay attention to the business side of the industry. Why? Because unlike films or music, console games are played on specialist hardware. You can play any CD with any stereo, any video in any VCR – you can even play any PC game on any PC (as long as it's fast enough). But *Metal Gear Solid* will only work on a Sony PlayStation and *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* will only work on a Nintendo 64. That all means that when you buy your console you're allying yourself with a hardware company (Sony or Nintendo right now, perhaps Sega in the near future) and the success or failure of that company will affect how much fun you get from your system. If it's doing well, you can expect to see loads of

games released and all the best titles will come out first on your machine. If it's less successful, like Sega's disastrous Saturn, it runs the risk of being ignored by the major game publishers and thus ending up a gaming backwater. Should the hardware company collapse completely, you'll be left with little more than a £150 paperweight. Just talk to anyone who bought a 3DO.



The Power of PlayStation

Everyone knows someone with a PlayStation. But how do the sales figures for this console really shape up?

■ There are now over four million Playstations in active use in the UK – more than one in ten of all households that have a TV have one. Across Europe as a whole, Nintendo 64 is doing better than the Super NES or NES ever managed, with total sales to date of around six

million. So how does all this success compare to other systems of the past? Our graph (right) shows estimates of the maximum number of previous games platforms that were ever simultaneously in use. It also shows the year that the most important systems

were at their peak of popularity. As you can see, PlayStation is miles ahead – and shows absolutely no sign of slowing down soon. Noted industry experts are currently suggesting that worldwide total PlayStation sales could top 100 million before the system's through.

Choosing which system to buy is a lot like betting on the horses, really. There are winners, and there are losers. Except not this year. In the quite remarkable 1998, it was winners all the way.

For '98 has been – without doubt – the biggest single year in the history of videogames. The figures speak for themselves. Forget Mega Drive and Super Nintendo. Pay no attention to the paltry Amiga. Ignore that old hippy bloke in the corner droning on about the Sinclair Spectrum. Right here, right now, is as big as videogames have ever got.

Let me throw some numbers at you. In the UK alone, 1998 will have seen almost £1 billion of new software sold by the time that the shops shut on December 31st – that's around 30 million games. It's more money than was spent on the movies. Indeed, this £1 billion is

63% up on the 1997 games total of £623.4 million which, in turn, was 64% more than 1996's £375 million. This is spectacular, almost frightening, growth. No form of popular entertainment – not films, not even pop music – has ever experienced growth on a scale like this before. Videogames are going through the roof.

Breaking down those figures, the Nintendo 64 has contributed some, particularly towards the tail end of the year, and the Game Boy has pulled off a real veteran's rally. The excitement about Sega's new offering, Dreamcast, has added some 128-bit spice to the proceedings. But the undisputed star of the show has, of course, been PlayStation. Nothing seems capable of stopping Sony's 32-bit hit from boldly going into new, uncharted territory virtually every week – and at warp factor ten,

HOW MANY?

Year	System	Peak Active European User Base
1998	PlayStation	15m
	Nintendo 64	6m
1992	Mega Drive	6m
	Super NES	4m
1991	NES	5m
	Sega MS	4m
	Amiga	8m
1985	C64	4m
	Spectrum	4.5m

KEY: ■ Sony ■ Nintendo ■ Sega ■ Commodore ■ Sinclair

■ Our figures suggest that if you didn't get one of these for Christmas, you were the only one who missed out.

1998 has been – without a doubt – the biggest single year in the history of videogames

struggled to keep up with such an aggressive front runner. The N64 has, of course, been hamstrung by an embarrassing lack of quality software during the first seven months of the year. It's gotten a lot better recently, but between *GoldenEye 007* in February and *Banjo-Kazooie*, released on the last day of July, there wasn't a single new release of any note for the machine. Even now there are less than 100 titles available for the format, compared with over 500 for PlayStation. Nevertheless, Nintendo will still shift over three

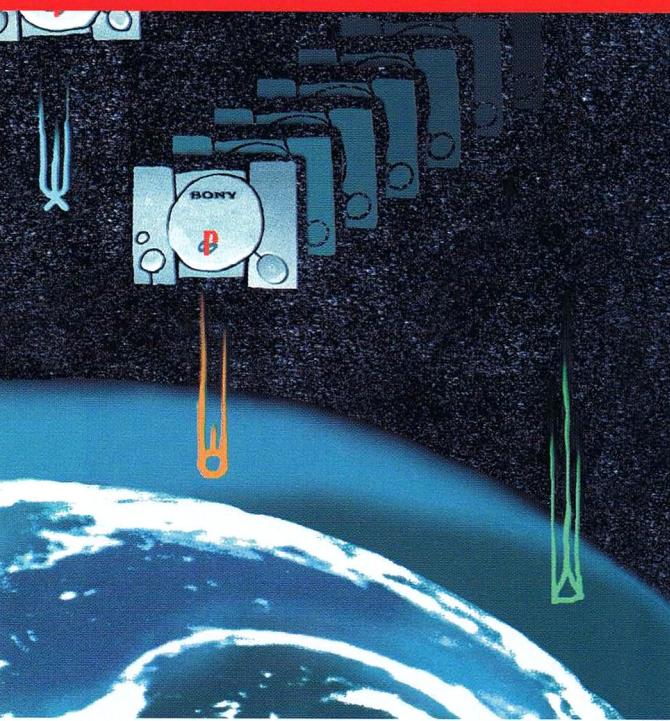
million consoles in Europe this year, bringing the N64's ongoing sales total up to around six million. Again, it has already eclipsed the 16-bit SNES which managed just two million units in Europe during its peak year (1992).

Even the "loser" is starting to look like a big winner.

And Nintendo also has Game Boy. This timeless handheld (it's now over a decade old) had its biggest year yet in 1998. In fact, Game Boy has been Nintendo's most successful system this year, achieving European sales of 3.6

GAME ON

SPECIAL REPORT



By being a consistent hit PlayStation has made life a damn sight easier for software houses

million (including one million of Game Boy Color, launched in November). In any other year, facing any other competitor, these figures would easily be enough to guarantee market leadership, but in the post-PlayStation era, they amount to nothing more than a distant squabble for second place.

But the stunning PlayStation phenomenon has done so much more than merely (merely!) take the industry to new commercial heights, however. It's also made the games market a much more predictable place than it has ever been before, particularly since its success has been on a truly global scale. PlayStation is the number one console all over the world, although it doesn't necessarily dominate to the same staggering degree elsewhere as it does in Europe. In the US, Nintendo remains a major force; in Japan, amazingly, Sega still holds sway, with Saturn (you remember the Saturn?) hanging on grimly and Dreamcast being afforded a decent reception.

By being a consistent, trusted hit, PlayStation has made life a damn sight easier for software houses. They're no longer faced with a multitude of risk laden choices. Instead they can all plump for one easy game development option: make it populist and make it PlayStation. So, while there may well be over 500 games for the PlayStation already released, this figure looks set to increase dramatically. But alongside the

most obvious choices (for example a PlayStation action game or a PC real-time strategy release) developers will be faced with some more interesting new challenges in '99. Like, is it really worth ramping up support for the increasingly successful N64? Should they risk going big on Dreamcast? How best can they exploit the more extreme ends of the wide demographic being attracted by PlayStation – older gamers, younger gamers, far more female gamers. And, lurking somewhere in the background, what about PlayStation 2...

Ah yes, PlayStation 2, the mystery machine that everyone except Sony is talking about. The machine that doesn't officially exist, but is believed to be finished and ready, right down even to the colour of its casing. Nothing's been confirmed (or denied) as yet, but it's thought that Sony's new offering (probably DVD-based and with a dedicated 3D processor capable of delivering ten million polygons per second) might be unveiled for the first time at the Tokyo Games Show this spring (if it is, of course, Arcade will be there) and launched in Japan before Christmas. The machine probably won't hit Europe until the year 2000 or so, but it's there, it's waiting.

1998 was a massive year for gaming, the biggest yet. 1999 will be even bigger – and, with all these new developments, even more exciting.



THINGS TO COME

Reasons to be cheerful in 1999

Whatever you play – on whatever system – the year ahead looks good.

■ Videogaming has traditionally been a "boom or bust" business. Consoles arrive, everyone goes completely bonkers for two or three years, and then they disappear again. They're a bit like John Travolta, except not as good at dancing. The rather odd thing this time round is that the particular "boom" we're enjoying at the moment shows no sign of slowing down. No matter what system you own, there are reasons to believe that 1999 will be a great year. Reasons like these...



PlayStation Sequels, sequels, and more sequels.

■ Success breeds success, and one thing you can be sure of is that there will be no shortage of PlayStation games released in 1999. There'll be hundreds of 'em. The only real trouble is that when a business gets this big, people tend to play it safe. Hence we will be getting sequels by the bucketload. Our list of 1999's most anticipated games reads frighteningly like the 1998 – or even the 1997 – list, but with different numbers at the end of each game name. Check it out: *Gran Turismo 2*, *Ridge Racer Type 4*, *Tomb Raider IV*, *WipEout 3*, *Tekken 4*, *Destruction Derby 3*, *Final Fantasy VIII*, *PaRappa the Rapper 2* and so on.

But this doesn't mean that innovation is dead. Sean Atkins, editor of *PlayStation Power* magazine says, "On the surface it's easy to think that PlayStation games are stuck in a rut, but actually the opposite is true. Not only is there a great deal of innovation happening within the better sequels – *Ridge Racer 4* promises to be drastically different from any previous game in the series, for instance – there are also plenty of brand new games coming for the system. Both *PaRappa the Rapper* and *Gran Turismo* are recent surprise hits that came out of nowhere – the only reason people talk about sequels the whole time is that they're a known quantity."

"Besides, when you have around 20 million PlayStations in use in Europe alone, developers can take chances on innovative games. Even if only one in 20 PlayStation gamers buy it, it's still a million seller."

He has a point.

■ Will it be number IV?



Nintendo 64 It's getting better all the time.

■ The great game drought of mid-1998, which saw gameplay-starved Nintendo 64 owners cramming books, toast and golf clubs into their cartridge slots in the crazed hope of yielding a few new precious gaming moments, is over. Finally, the games came. And with them came a renewed sense of optimism in the whole N64 scene.

James Ashton, editor of *N64 Magazine*, thinks 1999 will be Nintendo's best year yet. "It'll be a while before anyone gets tired of *Zelda 64* or *Turok 2*," he says, "but look at the games coming. There's *Jet Force Gemini*, *Donkey Kong Country*, *Perfect Dark*, *Banjo-Twooie* and a secret project from Rare. There's *Smash Bros*, a Nintendo fighting game – and *Super Mario 64.2*. Then there's *South Park* and *Shadowman* from Acclaim."

The new RAM Pak will make a big difference to N64 gaming. This £30 add-on (it's also included free with *Turok 2*) gives developers more memory space to create better graphics. "It will stretch the difference between N64 and PlayStation games even further," believes Ashton.

And there may be a couple of other surprises. "Back in November of 1997, Nintendo showed a sneak preview of a game called *Jungle Emperor Leo*," he reveals. "It was being designed by Shigeru Miyamoto, the man behind for *Zelda* and *Mario*, but then the trail went cold and no more was heard of it. But this game could resurface in 1999 and be a huge hit."

Nintendo has pulled surprises like this before." Lastly, Ashton reckons that *Pocket Monsters* could be as big in the UK as it's been in Japan. The idea is that gamers create and nurture their "monsters" on Game Boy (in the way you'd develop a Tamagotchi) and then pit these monsters against those of friends on an N64. "It could be huge," says Ashton. You've been warned.



■ More from Link's dad?



Dreamcast Sega's all-new 128-bit wild card.

■ Dreamcast's recent Japanese launch won't have had much of an immediate effect on the status quo – in Japan, PlayStation enjoys an unassailable lead, while N64 is all but dead and buried (even Sega's Saturn is outselling it). But the mid-to-long-term Dreamcast effect could be huge. Sega estimates that 500,000 Dreamcasts will find their way into the hands of eager Japanese gamers by February, and this number can only grow throughout 1999. If Dreamcast creates the kind of buzz that Sega expects, then not only will its sales continue to rise, but PlayStation sales will fall – Sony's machine will no longer enjoy the cache of being the hottest box on the street.

UK gamers will get their hands on the Dreamcast in September '99. With surefire hits such as *Sonic Adventure*, *Virtua Fighter 3tb*, *Sega Rally 2* and *Biohazard: Code Veronica* leading the charge, the power of Sega's assault on Sony's new found empire shouldn't be underestimated.



■ Speeding toward '99.



Game Boy Color You have to hand it to Nintendo.

■ It's incredible to think that in 1998, nearly ten years after its original debut, Nintendo's Game Boy enjoyed its most successful year. And there's no reason to assume that 1999 will see anything other than further success for everyone's favourite purple handheld. Games to watch out for include *South Park*, *Zelda*, and *Harvest Moon*.



PC Consoles? What consoles?

■ The PC continues to march on relentlessly, oblivious to all the comings and goings of the console business. And the gaming scene has never looked healthier. Indeed, already there are plenty of hits to look forward to. The pick of the bunch has to be id software's *Quake III: Arena* – can the Texas developer that shook the world shake it yet again? The smart money says it can. The game's focus is very much on the multi-player experience (id's John Carmack has gone on record saying, "Quake III is designed purely with the deathmatch in mind"). And although this means that it's likely to be a bigger hit in the US, where free local phone calls means the on-line multiplayer business is a lot more vibrant than here in the UK, there's plenty of reason for UK gamers to be excited. No one does shoot-'em-ups better than id, and the gaming world is watching to see how id redefines all the rules this time around.

Other games to watch out for include Ion Storm's *Anachronox* (an enormous RPG built using the *Quake II* engine), Peter Molyneux's Lionhead Studio's *Black and White*, Cavedog's *Good and Evil* (designer Ron Gilbert is previously responsible for LucasArts' ground-breaking *Secret of Monkey Island* and 3D Realms' black-comedy shooter *Max Payne*).

"It's not just the many hundreds of new games on the way that'll make '99 so great for PC owners," says Jim Flynn, editor of *PC Gamer*. "PCs themselves are getting cheaper all the time – this time next year you'll be able to get a good gaming PC, one that would cost you a four figure sum today, for a mere £500–600. And 3Dfx's new Voodoo 3 graphics card, available around March, will make even better-looking games possible. Plus, for the owners of low-spec PCs, there'll be many more hunting games. *3D Hunting Grizzly* (+*Maneater Mission* – hunt the grizzly before he kills again!) is my current favourite, but there are still more to come."



■ South Park guys shrink!

■ Quake III – future of the deathmatch?

1998, as it happened

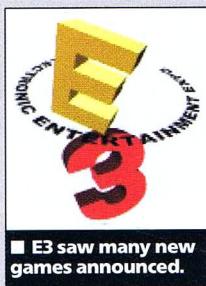
It all went so quickly. Here's our blink-and-you-missed-it year in games...



■ Play the games and wear the kit.



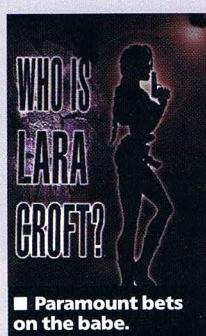
■ Tiger feat: Crash Bandicoot 3 will sell big this Christmas.



■ E3 saw many new games announced.



■ The PocketStation – Sony's new memory card with attitude.



■ Paramount bets on the babe.

January

■ *Tomb Raider II* confirmed as the biggest-selling game of 1997. Sony launches a dedicated PlayStation Web site (<http://www.playstation-europe.com>) as the console's UK installed base cruises past the two million mark. Sega reveals that its all-new console, then code named Katana, will not be rolled out to Europe until 1999.



February

■ Japanese games shops are besieged by overnight queues of frenzied punters as Capcom unleashes *Resident Evil 2* on its home turf. Sony says it hopes European PlayStation sales might top five million in 1998. Sony pulls a major surprise, announcing plans for a new PlayStation peripheral known initial as a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) – basically a memory card with knobs on that's also capable of acting as a small primitive portable system, playing titles (or, sometimes, samples of titles) that it takes via the PlayStation itself from specially adapted main games. Top UK coder Bullfrog announces that the third game in its classic *Populous* series – *The Beginning*, originally scheduled for Christmas '97 – has been delayed by another six months.



■ New in the shops: *Nagano Winter Olympics* (PlayStation, N64); *Nuclear Strike* (PlayStation, PC); *GoldenEye 007* (N64)

March

■ After literally years of speculation and rumour, Nintendo announces plans for a colour Game Boy. The firm also reveals a European target of three million sales for N64 in 1998. Veteran development team Sensible Software (*Sensible Soccer*, *Cannon Fodder*) puts up the For Sale signs, declaring that it's impossible to remain independent in the modern day games market. Paramount Studios confirms it is working on a movie based on the *Tomb Raider* series of games.



■ New in the shops: *Fighter's Destiny* (N64)

April

■ Sony is contemplating launching its range of natty PlayStation clothing (previously available only through mail order) in high street stores. Electronic Arts promises that the company's forthcoming *World Cup 98* will be the biggest ever release in the European games market, smashing the sales records held by *Tomb Raider II*.



■ New in the shops: *Resident Evil 2* (PlayStation); *Starcraft* (PC)

May

■ The N64, still struggling to build a substantial software catalogue, is boosted by the news that three leading publishers, Codemasters, Infogrames and Activision, will all be supporting the format. Global sales of PlayStation hit 20 million. *World Cup 98* is released but, though it shoots to the top of the charts, fails to hit the huge sales targets set by publisher EA, leaving *Tomb Raider* as the market's pace setter. Sega unveils its new console complete with a new name, Dreamcast, to an invite-only audience of developers and publishers in Tokyo. Acclaim, Midway, MicroProse, GT Interactive and Interplay all confirm that they'll be supporting the new system. The entire industry gathers in Atlanta for E3, the games market's biggest annual trade show. Star titles include *Zelda 64*, *Tomb Raider III* and *Spyro*.



■ New in the shops: *Gran Turismo* (PlayStation); *Incoming* (PC); *Forsaken* (PC); *World Cup 98* (PlayStation, PC)

June

■ As the World Cup kicks off in France, Infogrames is believed to have signed a licensing deal with Brazilian centre forward Ronaldo (the resulting game will be out in the first half of '99). EA, the firm behind the hugely successful *FIFA* series, grabs the rights to the next two World Cups. Konami concedes that hotly tipped PSX title *Metal Gear Solid* probably won't hit Europe before Christmas.



■ New in the shops: *Unreal* (PC); *Spice World* (PlayStation); *WWF Warzone* (N64, PlayStation); *Commandos* (PC)

July

■ *Heart of Darkness*, the most delayed title in the history of gaming, six years in development and four years after it was originally scheduled, is finally released. It's not much cop and doesn't sell particularly well. Oh dear. European publishers begin to show enthusiasm for Dreamcast. Early converts include Infogrames (*V-Rally*) and Gremlin (*Actua Soccer*). Sony offers PlayStation packed with *Gran Turismo* for £149.99. Sega announces a mid-September launch for Dreamcast. A price tag of £199 is expected.



■ New in the shops: *Premier Manager '98* (PlayStation, PC); *Point Blank* (PlayStation); *Colin McRae Rally* (PlayStation); *Banjo-Kazooie* (N64)

August

■ The European installed base of PlayStation passes ten million. BAFTA (the British Academy of Film and Television Arts) decides to invite game developers to join its ranks. MicroProse (*Civilization*, *Grand Prix 2*) merges with toy giant Hasbro (*Monopoly*, *Cluedo*) to form new gaming superpower. Nintendo denies rumours that *Zelda* will be pushed back into 1999. Sony cuts the price of the PlayStation to £99, level with the N64. EA, the world's biggest games firm, acquires Westwood Studios (the Las Vegas team behind *Command & Conquer/ Red Alert*) for £122.5 million.



■ New in the shops: *International Superstar Soccer '98* (N64, PlayStation); *WWF Warzone* (N64, PlayStation); *Commandos* (PC)

September

■ Nintendo finally cuts its software prices, with major releases and most back catalogue dropping from £44.99 to £39.99. *Tomb Raider* publisher Eidos snags up two hot footy licences: England starlet Michael Owen (his *World League Soccer* game is out this month) and UEFA's *Champions League* (next spring). It emerges that Westwood Studios' third C&C game, *Tiberian Sun*, has been delayed until after Christmas.



■ New in the shops: *Tekken 3* (PlayStation); *FIFA 99* (PlayStation, PC); *TOCA 2* (PlayStation, PC); *Mission: Impossible* (N64)

November

■ Nintendo's Game Boy Color arrives, priced at £69.99, supported by over half a dozen titles. Eidos launches *Tomb Raider III: The Adventures of Lara Croft*. It already looks like becoming the most successful instalment so far in the series which, through the efforts of the first and second games, has notched up global sales of nearly ten million units.



■ New in the shops: *Body Harvest* (N64); *Tomb Raider III* (PC, PlayStation); *FIFA 99* (PlayStation, PC); *TOCA 2* (PlayStation, PC)

December

■ And so this is Christmas. Except, of course, at the time of writing, it's still weeks away. It's not hard to predict, however, that December will see more games consoles, PCs and entertainment software sold in a single month than ever before. PlayStation will continue to dominate – although Nintendo will have a very happy Christmas providing *Zelda* and *Turok 2* make in time for the 25th.



■ New in the shops: *Turok 2* (N64); *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* (N64); *Crash Bandicoot 3* (PlayStation)

January

■ New in the shops: *1080° Snowboarding* (N64); *Spyro the Dragon* (PlayStation); *Formula 1 '98* (PlayStation)

COMING SOON

A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY



■ Yuli is Kensei's obligatory cute school-girl character, and wears a similar costume to Ling from Tekken 3. But she doesn't have a pet panda.



NINTENDO 64

KENSEI: SACRED FIST

Knicker-flashing, neck-snapping beat-'em-up from Konami.

■ IN A NUTSHELL: Konami warms up for the much-awaited UK release of king sneak-'em-up Metal Gear Solid with a nifty 3D beat-'em-up. Its USP: this game is all about the fine art of the counter-attack.

Last time we checked, Tekken 3 was still undisputed king of the beat-'em-up castle. But as anyone who's seen a kung fu film – or, indeed, played a scrapping game – will tell you, it's never long before the young pretenders start lining up to take a pop. Hence Kensei: Sacred Fist, one newcomer with a better chance than most. Not only is it the first PlayStation fighter from ISS and Metal Gear meister Konami, but it boasts a subtle new combat system designed to (amongst other things) prevent visiting mates and relatives from beating your well-practised combos by the simple act of hammering the buttons.

If this new fighting system could be described in a couple of words, it'd be "counter-attacking." A "redirect" button sees your character take a specific martial arts

stance, then use his blocking of the blows raining on him as platform for fighting back. Turning defence into attack, you can cunningly divert your opponent's smacks, simultaneously hitting back through their blows, applying the old martial arts adage of using your foe's aggression against them. Mistime your pugilistic reply, however, and you're left vulnerable to counter-counter attacks. Things could quickly get very complicated – but then that's not a bad thing in a genre often dismissed as depth-free.

But this being a Konami game, it ain't no one-trick pony. Everything else you expect, nay demand, from a beat-'em-up is present and correct. There are four ways to play (Normal, Versus, Time Attack and Survival) and a character select screen crammed with 20 characters – 12 of them in



silhouette, unlocking as you play the game. Of the eight instantly available, the usual Japanese fighting suspects are all there, ranging from school-girls (this one's called Yuli) to handsome male leads (Yugo), taking in eccentrics like the grunge-inspired Heinz and David, a bloke in a cowboy hat, along the way. And in the worst piece of videogame sexism since *Dead or Alive*'s breast-inflation option, most of the females "accidentally" flash their knickers as they fight.

Thankfully, however, the fighting system is rather more sophisticated. A well-balanced range of blows, and different but powerful characters, should make for very close, satisfying battles. Although the characters don't quite have *Tekken*'s graphic realism, *Kensei* comes across as a polished item – the combat mechanics, you

POWERFUL CHARACTERS SHOULD MAKE FOR SATISFYING BATTLES

feel, have been playtested, then playtested again, to the point where timing is at least as important as move learning. In our experience, that's the sign of a quality beat-'em-up.

Of course, *Kensei*'s main problem is the same as that facing every other fighter – it isn't *Tekken* 4. It isn't even *Tekken* 3. But by concentrating on what really matters to fighting folk – the actual scrapping itself – there's every chance it'll act as a decent stopgap. We reckon it might be capable of giving the Big T a vicious Chinese burn, matching it for depth if not out and out brilliance.

FACT FILE

**KENSEI:
SACRED FIST**
FORMAT:
PLAYSTATION
DEVELOPER:
KONAMI
PUBLISHER:
KONAMI
PLAYERS: 1-2
ON SALE IN UK:
JANUARY

PLAYSTATION DEVIL DICE

An ingenious, utterly addictive puzzler that should soon have pixie-pushed dice dots dancing across your closed eyelids.

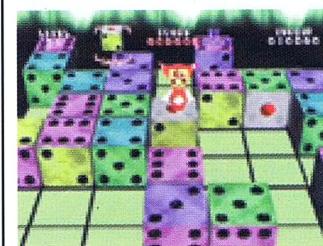
■ IN A NUTSHELL: It's a kind of 3D Tetris, involving dice which have to be manipulated into groups of matching faces. Addiction clinics are already being established.

FACT FILE
DEVIL DICE
FORMAT:
PLAYSTATION
DEVELOPER: SHIFT
PUBLISHER: SONY
PLAYERS: 1-5 (WITH
MULTI-TAP)
ON SALE IN UK:
JANUARY

Ice games in history No. 1: *Snake Eyes* – no skill here, but tension instilled by the fact that if you roll double one, you're dead. Dice games in history No. 2: *Yahtzee* – tight-fisted Dad buys cheapo game because he can't afford *Mousetrap*, and prolonged hours of Christmas Day boredom are the result.

Devil Dice doesn't have much of a pedigree, but with one simple, yet inspired, stroke the humble dice have been transformed into a weapon of mind-roasting terror. The pointy-hatted little imp which you control may look cute enough, but while stuck in his tiny dice-infested world, he will do his best to make your life hell.

The essentials of the game are easy to pick up when you see it in action, but as you won't have a



chance to do that for a couple of months, we'll try to explain. Your little devil stands atop of a die in the middle of 3D grid, some of which is filled with other

dice. Lead him in any direction and the die moves under him, coming to rest on a differently-numbered face as it rolls into a new position. The upward face is the one that counts, and the aim is to manipulate the dice into touching blocks of which the upward numbered face is the same. A number two requires a grouping of two dice, number three requires three and so on. On completion of a group, the dice in question will disappear into the ground. The idea is to clear the whole grid, but as soon as a group of dice sink into the floor, more rise up in other areas of the grid. Like *Tetris*, the game is infinite, and therefore as infuriatingly as it is addictive.

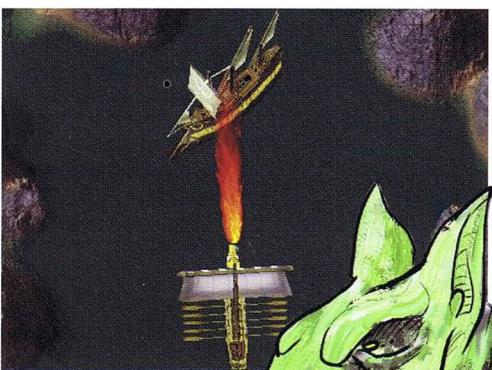
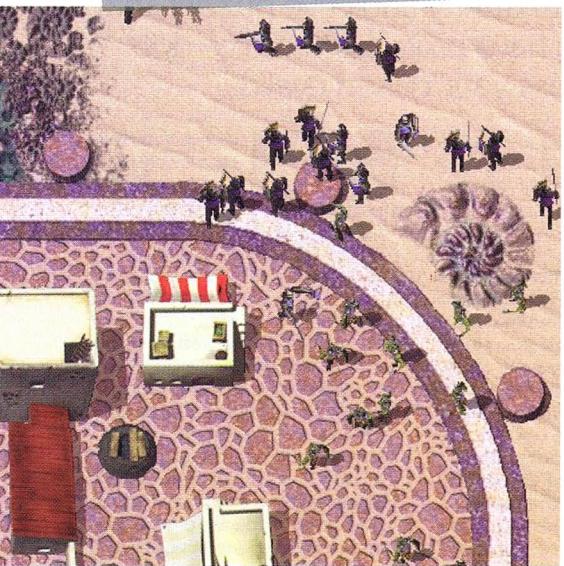
The two-player battle mode is as frenzied as any beat-'em-up, and the five-player option (entitled, not without reason, "War Mode") is the best reason yet to save up for that multi-tap. In the unlikely event that you become tired of the main game, there are all kinds of offshoot puzzles which not only provide a diversion, but will hone your skills for another assault at that high score. *Devil Dice* looks to be a class act: we fancy *Tetris* and *Bust-A-Move* will soon have a worthy new challenger.

A

■ It may look like something out of a conceptual Heaven 17 video, but don't worry about the graphical quality – just feel that puzzling width. The concept: roll your dice around the grid leaving matching faces upward. The verdict: please direct me immediately to the nearest counsellor...

COMING SOON

A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY



■ TA: Kingdoms is based on Total Annihilation, the best real time strategy game of all.

■ IN A NUTSHELL: Hugely respected PC developer Cavedog relocates Total Annihilation, its top-notch real-time strategy game, to a fantasy setting.

You can only admire the cheek of these Cavedog boys. Just as the original Total Annihilation's massed forces rolled relentlessly right over the top of the once mighty C&C: Red Alert, so this more fantasy-orientated sequel is setting out to do a similar number on Warcraft II, the chosen game of real-time strategy fans who want orcs and magic rather than tiny tanks and soldiers. The smart money is on them not stopping until they hit Berlin.

What we have here, then, doesn't look too original – at least at first sight – but it oozes quality. We're in default-setting Tolkien territory again, of course, with the now obligatory perpetual forces of darkness about to descend on a once peaceful land. You know the deal. The thing to get really excited about though, is the way Cavedog has re-jigged TA's game engine to enable Kingdom's four

different races – representing Earth, Air, Fire and Water – to set about eliminating each other. The action promises to be a lot less predictable than in more typical attack/retreat two-player skirmishes.

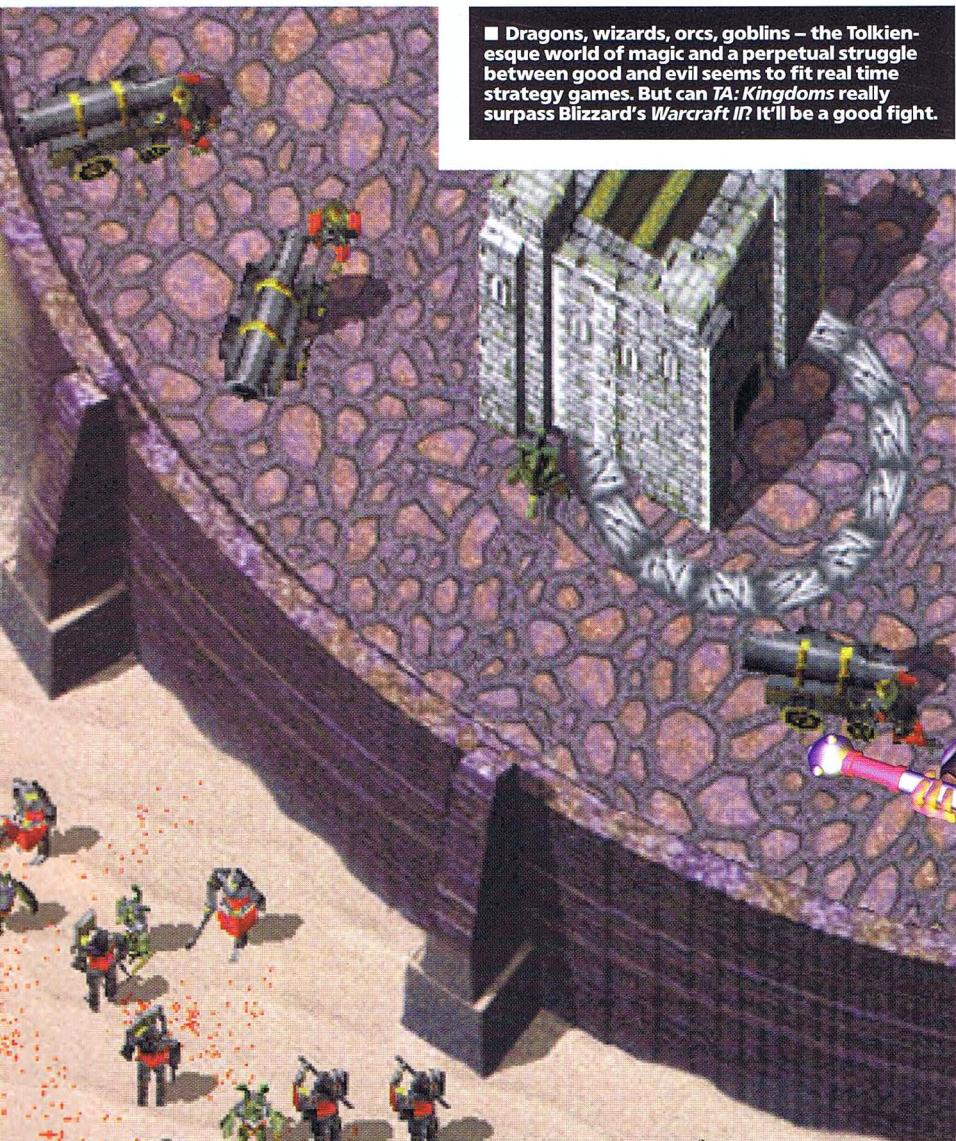
Visually the game is impressive, with minutely-detailed graphics that extend right down to the arrows flying from archer's bows. Sensibly, given that nothing else has yet come within a clear country mile of matching the original TA game engine, Cavedog is using a tuned-up version for Kingdoms. Now using 16-bit colour, it takes the original's exquisite landscapes and textured-polygon forces to even more sumptuous heights. It's going to look great.

The use of magic is interesting too, with the more law-abiding races using sorcery only to heal each other and

PC

TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS

The world's finest strategy game is about to get medieval on your ass. (This is a good thing.)



■ Dragons, wizards, orcs, goblins – the Tolkien-esque world of magic and a perpetual struggle between good and evil seems to fit real time strategy games. But can TA: Kingdoms really surpass Blizzard's Warcraft II? It'll be a good fight.

THOSE IN THE BLACK POINTY HATS AREN'T ABOVE THE USE OF MAGIC TO CREATE EVIL ZOMBIE ARMIES

build things, relying on catapults and battering rams for offensive duties, while those in the black, pointy hats aren't above all sorts of dodgy shenanigans, up to and including the use of zombie armies. Hmm, magic for good, or for the creation of zombie armies? We know which we'd choose.

And if this wasn't enough, the cast iron strategy underlying the original *Total Annihilation* has been further strengthened by no end of tweaking. Certainly, gaining domination of the

high terrain is likely to be a prime consideration for anyone looking to pound foes from a great distance with their medieval boulder-chucking machinery. True, there aren't as many units per army as in the original game, but, fear not – that's only because they're now shared amongst four, rather than two, powers. Many of the superfluous elements of TA have been jettisoned to leave your forces leaner and easier to marshal. You'll quickly be able to download new machines from the net too.

That's TA: Kingdoms then. An almighty battle between good and evil played out with sorcery and siege weapons and almost certain to be one of the finest pieces of strategy you'll see all year. And let's not forget those zombie armies.

Start buffing your shield.

FACT FILE

TOTAL ANNIHILATION: KINGDOMS
■ FORMAT: PC
■ DEVELOPER: CAVE DOOR
■ PUBLISHER: GT INTERACTIVE
■ PLAYERS: 1
■ RELEASE DATE: QUARTER 1, 1999
■ PC NEEDS: P200, 32MB RAM, 3D CARD, WIN95

PLAYSTATION PC

MONKEY HERO

Remember that crazy TV show, *Monkey?* This game is based on it. Kind of. (A bit.)

■ **IN A NUTSHELL:** Hit point-free action RPG based around the ancient Chinese legends (and, of course, the funky '70s TV show).

With slapstick, brilliantly theme-tuned '70s kung fu series *Monkey fast overtaking Scooby Doo* as a topic of heated nostalgic discussion in Student Unions across the country, the time is certainly right for this top-down, action RPG starring the magnificently sideburned primate.

To be fair, *Monkey Hero*'s nothing to do with the TV show, but simply based around the same, conveniently well out of copyright, ancient Chinese stories. That being the case, we can't guarantee heavy involvement from Piggy, the fish-bloke or the quite-clearly-a-girl priest – although, as staples of the legend, they should be here. But even if they're not, *Monkey Hero* comes packed with lots of staff twirling and cloud whistling to compensate. The end result is probably best seen as an RPG for beginners, not a suitable long-term project for hardened *Final Fantasy* veterans.

That's not to say it isn't big

FACT FILE

MONKEY HERO
■ FORMATS: PC, PLAYSTATION
■ DEVELOPER: BLAM
■ PUBLISHER: TAKE 2 INTERACTIVE
■ DEVELOPER: BLAM
■ PLAYERS: 1
■ ON SALE IN: JANUARY

– there are a 16 huge areas to pick your way through as you guide Monkey on a quest to locate eight chapters of a magic story book – but rather that its puzzles are so

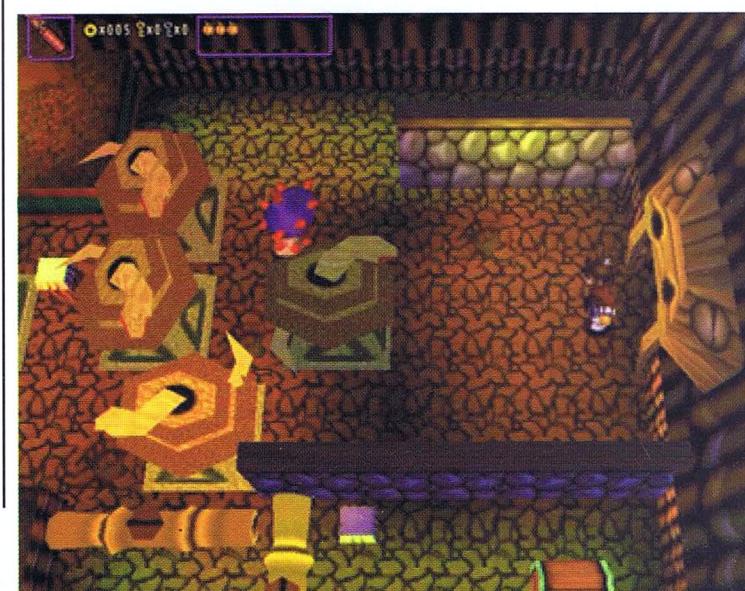
straightforward that it's unlikely to cause experienced gamers problems.

It's not all puzzle solving. There are also objects to pick up and even the occasional fight, making this very much an action RPG in the SNES *Zelda* mould. A lot of the gameplay involves making use of objects littered about the place – you'll be blowing holes in walls with dynamite, and using grappling hooks to reach inaccessible places. Naturally there are spells too (and where would an RPG be without them?), allowing Monkey to perform such feats as hover across gaping chasms and revealing hidden objects.

With a part anime, part Disney cutsey look to the characters, *Monkey Hero* could easily be dismissed as a game for the younger player. But suggesting it's just (you know) for kids, does ignore the fact that it's looking like a particularly well thought out and potentially engrossing release. Don't go expecting it to take over your life and assail you with hit points in the same way as *Final Fantasy VII* or *Alundra*, and you should be pleasantly surprised.

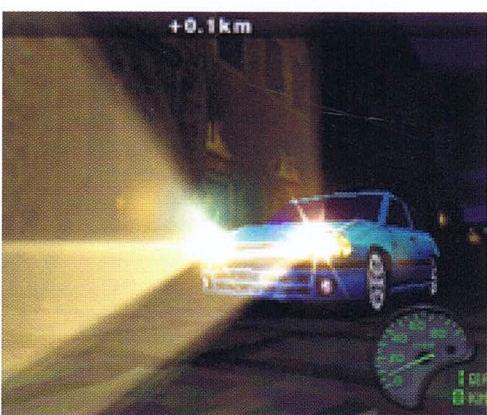
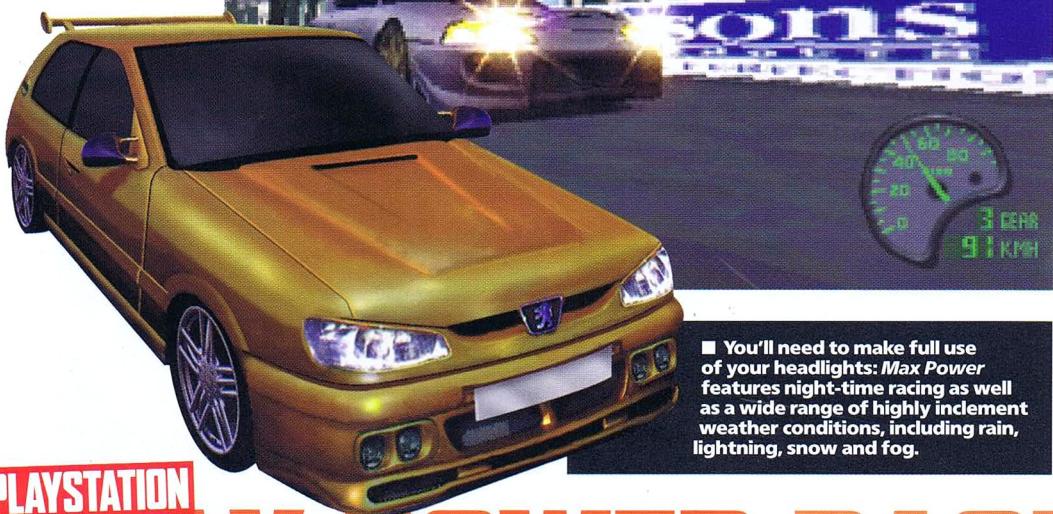
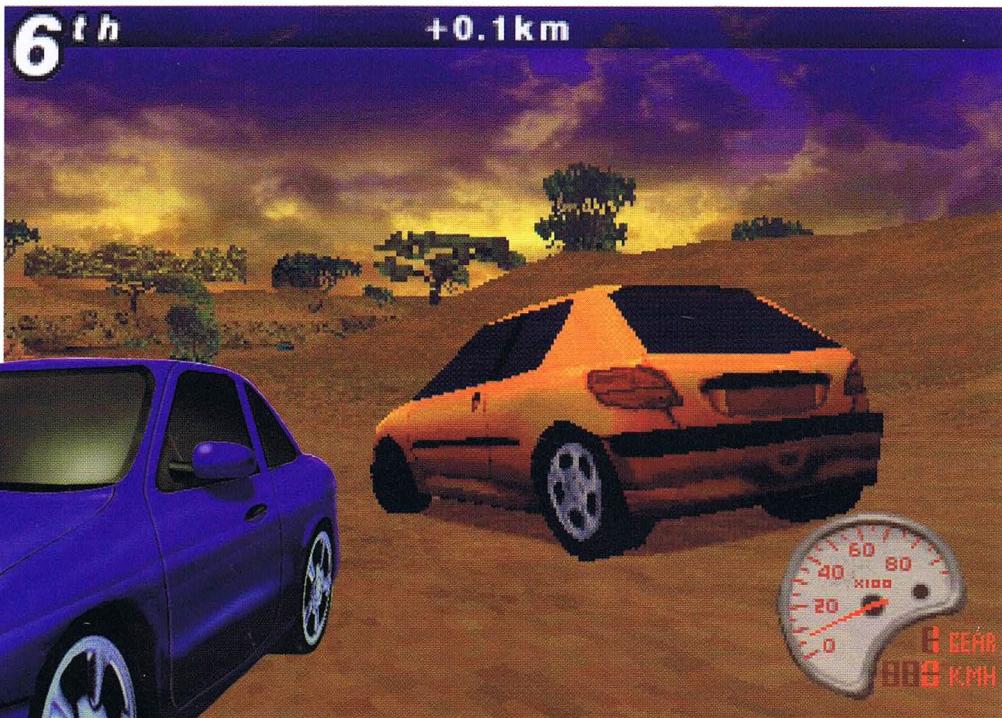
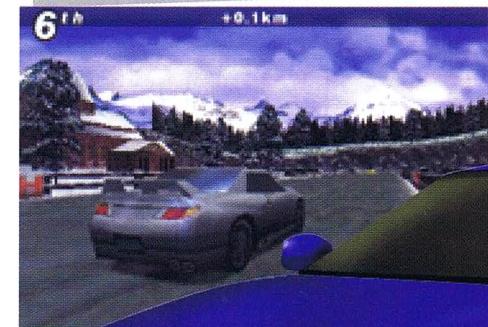


■ Looking for a fun, imaginative game (kind of) based on a crazy old BBC2 TV show? Look no further...



COMING SOON

A WORLD OF GAMING MERE MONTHS AWAY



You'll need to make full use of your headlights: *Max Power* features night-time racing as well as a wide range of highly inclement weather conditions, including rain, lightning, snow and fog.

PLAYSTATION

MAX POWER RACING

Astras pounding across Essex? Nope, this is exotic motors and global racing.

IN A NUTSHELL: The maker of Total Drivin', one of the best pre-Gran Turismo racers, are back with a new car game and tagged-on boy racer magazine licence. If the backwards baseball cap fits...

Do you remember *Total Drivin'*? For its time it was fantastic, packed with excitingly different car types and a wide range of tracks. And now comes developer Eutechnyx's belated follow up - a game that has much of the same feel as *Gran Turismo*.

The racing's structured in a similar league set up, with a

Car Constructor's Championship and 25 available motors, all realistic-looking models from mostly mainstream manufacturers. You start with the likes of Peugeot 206s, progressing to the high-octane thrills of Toyota Supras.

But could this be a better game than *GTR*? Well, there's a definite case to be made for *Max Power* picking up on *Gran Turismo*'s few perceived weaknesses. This offering has, after all, nearly triple the amount of tracks

(a big 30), situated in ten locations ranging from the glamorous (Rome and Monaco) to the bleak (Norway). Varied weather conditions, already reckoned to be a high-light of *GTR*, feature heavily, and cars also take damage - you can lose bumpers, smash headlights and mangle your bodywork with a noticeable effect on your motor's performance. All it needs now is a car-park burn-out or school-girl tit-flashing option.

FACT FILE

MAX POWER RACING

FORMAT:

PLAYSTATION

DEVELOPER:

EUTECHNYX

PUBLISHER:

INFOGRAPHICS

PLAYERS: 1-2

ON SALE IN UK:

JANUARY

As with most post-*Ridge Racer* driving games, the most powerful motors on offer are revealed with a car salesman-like flourish as rewards for winning races. In another semi-

nod to the great *Turismo*, 17 tuning options are also there to be unlocked. You can fiddle with brakes, adjust the steering and tweak the nuts and bolts, although not to quite the same intense Haynes manual-degree as in Sony's racer.

Max Power might not be quite as classy as, well, you know who... but the cars look good, the racing's tight and the stereo will rattle your windows. Review next issue.



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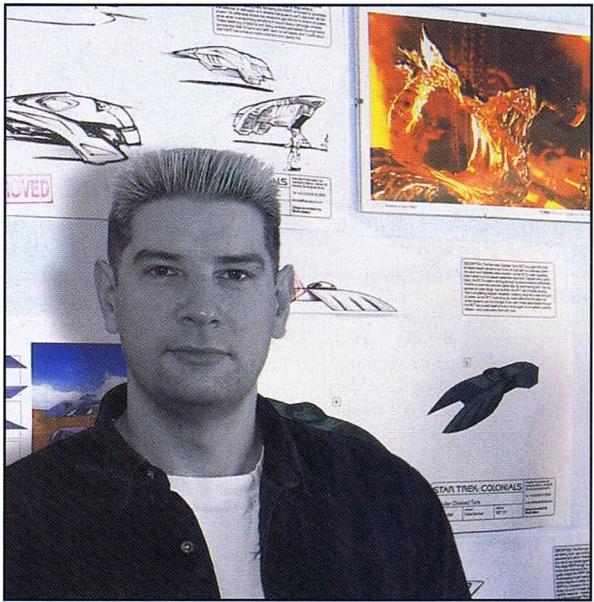
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Games Insider

One in Japan. One in the USA. One making games. One having played more games than is strictly healthy. Meet Arcade's regular experts.



BACKSCREEN

Neil Jackson

You've overdosed on the hype – so why are you still waiting for that new console?

We're all familiar with the scenario: you start hearing rumours of a new hardware platform; before you know it, speculative stories start appearing in the press; soon, you hear that it's out in Japan "the month after next"; but then it doesn't appear, and the delay stretches for months...

So why is this? Why is launching a new hardware system typically so difficult? My years in the industry have left me with a list of hurdles that often trip a fledgling hardware platform on its way to market. Most of these hurdles affect the development of the debut software titles, rather than the system itself. But seeing that no company is going to release a games console without any decent games, they are just as hazardous to the system's progress.

1) "I thought you knew how to do it!"

It's a new machine and nobody at the development house knows how to code the games for it yet. Like a cheap Japanese video-recorder, it could take years to master if it's a real bitch. PlayStation developers struggled for two years to really get the measure of that beast, and already it's due for replacement.

2) Hardware headaches

The manufacturer-approved, £3k development kit appears to be a pocket-calculator hooked up to a PC by a bit of string soaked in meths,

and it behaves almost entirely unlike the machine being hyped in the press. Shabby devkits mean long, expensive development, and games that never turn out as planned. Or just never turn out.

3) It's not just bad workmen who blame their tools...

Nowadays, most game developers rely on manufacturer-prepared libraries of functions to do the boring tasks like accessing CDs or screen manipulation (in theory it's great, because it means we don't have to mess about doing the boring, basic stuff – it's already been done for us). The problem is that if the routines that control these things are buggy, then so is your game. If the hardware manufacturer re-writes its buggy libraries from scratch midway through your project (and they will do this, albeit grudgingly) then you have the choice of starting over your project with the new code or giving up.

4) "Yes? No? Yes? No?"

So who's going to make what games? Developers can't afford to learn and master brand new machines on a whim, nor can they afford the development kits without having a project (and a publisher) to fund them. Meanwhile, publishers may have taken a battering with a particular platform or manufacturer before, or be wary about gambling on a new machine. Simultaneously, manufacturers may deliberately not want more than a few key games for their new machine's launch, so as not to confuse customers. So who gives the green light? It's usually the publisher's call, but it's heavily dependent on the other two parties – all three have to agree with the idea, or it's a non-starter.

5) "Revolutionary!" or bust

Manufacturers of new machines desperately want to offer "all-new experiences." This means no old games, no conversions from other platforms and, if possible, "something radical" that you can't get anywhere else. This costs – especially since it means that the development budget can't be recouped by porting the game to

other systems. Your single golden egg; their unproven basket. Will you give it to them?

6) Losing your nerve

New machines mean either new customers and opportunities, or grandiose flops and multi-million dollar losses. Many things can go wrong before launch: bad press, faulty hardware, short supplies, poor games or the wrong price, to name but a few. These factors give publishers nightmares, so they tend to fence-sit until it's certain that the platform will make a profit, sometimes killing the machine in the process.

7) "What kind of a console do you take me for?"

Console owners keep a pretty tight reign on the content of games for their system and have to "approve" everything. Green blood is a common result of this process, but many aspects of plot (including bad language, violence, religious (mis)representation, gore, obscenity, sex and – in fact – practically anything you can imagine that might actually be fun) can present approval problems. These can turn a million-dollar PC hit into the unreleasable console equivalent of *The Exorcist* overnight.

8) Pumpy partners

If a developer doesn't have the experience, time, staff or kit to convert one of its successful titles on to a new platform, then it may hive-off the job to another team. Then comes a right political quagmire. First, there are the royalty negotiations – you have to sort out who is going to get what, if the title does well. It's usually a bunfight, especially if the game relies on one team's proprietary tricks, or if the game-concept was an original idea belonging to another. Then there's deciding who is doing what, exactly. Then there's actually getting it done. And if it turns out that the conversion is too difficult, long-winded or infeasible, the publisher will cut its losses, and you'll never get to see the game. At least, not on your new dream machine.

So there we have it. The fact is that launching a new games machine is a right risky old business, and one always in danger of being scuppered by a variation on the old chicken-and-egg conundrum – the machine is no use without great dedicated software, but few people want to risk the investment needed to create great stuff for it before a single unit has been sold.

Are you curious about any specific aspect of the games industry? If so, drop me a line at backscreen@techno.demon.co.uk and I'll try and demystify the process for you.



THIS IS HARDCORE

Julian Rignall

Sports games: they don't have to be realistic to be great

There've been a ton of new releases here in the States over the past few weeks as the industry gears up for Thanksgiving, the traditional start of the Christmas shopping frenzy (and popular US two-day holiday). However, the bulk of the stuff that's come out is just a bunch of seen-it-all-before knobcheese. Cynical? Me? Nah. I'm just a fussy git who doesn't like to waste time playing slightly refined versions of last year's games. Or, indeed, the year before's, come to think of it...

Anyway, enough of my moaning. One game that's recently caught my jaundiced eyeball and provided more than an eighth of gaming pleasure is *PlayStation NFL Blitz*. If you haven't heard of it, it's a conversion of the eponymous Midway coin-op, and – if you hadn't already guessed from the title – it's a very arcadey American football game.

Take it as read that graphics, sound and gameplay are all top-notch. After all, why the hell would it be worth playing if they weren't? However, since traditional journalism requires facts to back up a statement, and since this fine organ to which I contribute usually favours words over pictures of grinning Page Three rejects, I'd better explain what makes *NFL Blitz* fun.

Simple: it's very cartoon-like. Not actually in terms of looks – the players and graphics are realistically drawn and animated – but in the gameplay itself. It's really over-the-top, but in the best way. Players are endowed with superhuman strength, so they can run faster, jump higher, tackle harder and throw farther than they can in real life. The controls are very intuitive – switching control of players is a breeze, and making them run, spin and punch other players out of the way is really easy. The end result is an incredibly fast, high-energy American football game that's brilliant fun to play. You can do huge throws, and then, once you have control of the catcher, make him leap high in the air to

grab the ball. Press the "turbo" button and watch him blister up the field quicker than a terrified bloke with explosive diarrhoea. Get the timing right, and your guy can punch, spin and shoulder-charge opponents out of the way. Conversely, if you're on defence, you can tackle, grab or simply dive on to a receiver and send him smashing into the ground (or flying up into the air). And because there are no referees (and therefore no penalties) you can even do this after a play has finished – always nice when you want to prove a point...

The final bonus is that the game is official. Yep, 'cos it carries an NFL license, it has all the top teams and players. This gives the game a really cool air, in the weird way that's common to licensed sports games. The end result: a very rewarding, enjoyable football game (but not, of course, a football sim).

Okay, so you're probably thinking, "It's alright for you, ya turncoat Americanised ex-pat. I don't give a monkey's jizz about American football." Well, to be honest, I'm not a follower of the sport. Not these days, thanks to Digital Cable and the fact that I get all the English soccer games every weekend (and indeed during the week – yaaaaay!). No. The point of all this is: a) to tell you about a game worth playing, regardless of whether or not you're a fan of the sport and, b) to send a request to all you lovely English developers out there: please make a *Soccer Blitz* game. There hasn't been one yet – at least, not one that works as well as *NFL Blitz*.

Think about it. It could be brilliant. Super-bendy shots, fast running, Ince-esque tackles, the ability to shoulder charge, do loony overhead kicks and headers, and all that kind of stuff. I'm talking about a proper, endorsed arcade football game that really delivers the goods. A game with realistic, motion-captured players who can jump, spin and hold off other players, great AI, comprehensive tactics and formation menus, but with players who have just enough superhuman powers to make the game larger than life. I want to be able to make Owen blow Schmeichel through the back of the net with a superfast shot. I want to see Beckham curving delicate but insanely bendy chips into the top corner of the net.

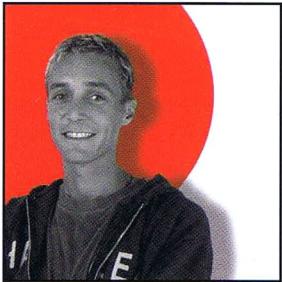
And to counter this, I want to be able to make David Seaman leap like a salmon to palm a ball over the bar. Obviously, balancing the illegal stuff while ensuring the game still plays excellent football would be quite tricky, but not insurmountable by any stretch.

Surely a game like this would be a winner? Soccer (sorry) is the world's most popular sport and, assuming the game was great, it'd sell like hotcakes. So, please,

A

make one. Somebody?

Julian is editor-in-chief of Imagine Games Network (www.ign.com), the most popular collection of gaming sites on the Internet.



TURNING JAPANESE

Jason Brookes

It's time to meet Japan's hardcore gaming corps...

For those who no-two-ways-about-it absolutely must have the very latest in videogames hardware and software, Japan's the only place to be. But the life of a dedicated game otaku (that's "fanatic" to you and me) is not an easy one. Not least because there's some pretty serious competition out there, with everyone vying to be first on their street with the really cool stuff. This is a country where the tectonic plates are forever rocking and sliding to the stomping of feet, all heading in the direction of Tokyo's best gaming stores.

To qualify for recruitment in Japan's hardcore gaming corps, you need to be prepared. You'll need a wallet stuffed with Yen, the stamina of a Sumo wrestler, and – perhaps most importantly of all – a healthy respect for the obsessive geekiness of your fellow otaku. Never underestimate your rival: while you're rolling out of bed mid-morning, bleary eyed after a *Final Fantasy VII* all-nighter, he's been camped outside a games store for hours (perhaps days) with a pair of *Metal Gear Solid* night-vision goggles and a Princess Toadstool Thermos flask, in anticipation of the release of a new SquareSoft mouse mat.

These guys are hardcore.

The fact is that Japan is full of videogame junkies all of whom would have the average Western psychologist reaching under the desk for a panic button. These are the guys who, just recently, shifted hell and high water to make sure they got their hands on Sega's Dreamcast on its 27 November release date. And it was no mean feat. As with most new consoles or big game launches, Sega instigated a prebooking system for Dreamcast over a month before its launch date. This initially allowed for a day-one ship-out of 200,000 units, but was immediately scaled back to just 100,000 when a manufacturing problem arose, resulting in all prebooking being stopped within two days. It meant – and still

means – that Dreamcast is currently a very hot property in Japan indeed.

But even the level of hysteria Dreamcast has generated is as nothing compared to the mayhem that used to occur in Japan's golden days of videogaming. Back when Nintendo ruled the roost with its 8-bit NES and 16-bit Super NES systems in the late '80s and early '90s (known as the Famicom and Super Famicom here in Japan), an RPG series called *Dragon Quest* would bring the Tokyo streets to a standstill with the release of each new installment. In 1992, when the fifth saga was unleashed to its army of fervent fans, a queue of 12,000 nutters waited patiently outside the branch of one electronics store, the line winding its way through Ikebukuro's streets for an incredible 5km. Several muggings of people who'd bought the game and were on their way home were reported to police.

This month's release of one of the best and most eagerly anticipated games of all time – *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, for the N64 – harks back to such times, but lacks quite the fervour of the old days. After all, legend has it that when its 16-bit predecessor, the classic *Zelda: A Link to the Past*, was released back in 1991 (exactly seven years to the day before the new 3D version), one hapless fan, who'd failed to bag a copy on the day, took revenge on a friend who had by torching his house. To the ground. Somehow it's difficult to see Nintendo's now-diminished status in Japan commanding such insanity again, no matter how good the game.

Indeed, the fact is that gaming in Japan is now a far more civilised pastime than it used to be, but demand still regularly outstrips supply. And so we come back to the current Dreamcast scarcity. With all the prebookable machines long since prebooked, it seems that for those of us who weren't quite quick enough off the mark, getting hold of a Dreamcast is going to be a waiting game. In fact, short of mugging a freshly recruited Dreamcaster on the streets of Akihabara, my chances of having Sega's new box under the telly for a week or two are looking desperately slim.

Maybe I've got to face it: I'm just not hardcore enough.

■ Jason is an ex-editor of Edge magazine and spends his time in Japan and the US.



AMERICAN EXPRESS

Simon Cox

The unstoppable thrill of the hunt

America, Christmas, 1997: *Riven*, sequel to *Myst*, the best-selling PC game of all time, is sent to the shops by the truckload. The oversized Kenworths and Freightliners behind it are filled with *Quake II* – another million-seller in the making. The pundits are predicting a scrap of titanic proportions for the number one chart position. And then something happens that no-one predicted. As the results roll in for January, it's clear that something has gone horribly wrong. The number one spot is actually occupied by a game called *Deer Hunter*. Nobody has a clue as to why this should be – especially the press.

In England, we generally like our beer and our deer warm. Here in the States, people like both ice cold – but even that doesn't quite explain the success of WizardWorks' *Deer Hunter*, or the ten million me-too hunting games that have since found their way to the shelves, ferried not by trucks this time, but an enormous bandwagon (presumably with a trophy buck strapped to the grille). To date, the original *Deer Hunter* has sold over one million units, and been featured all over the place, notably in *Newsweek* magazine. Sales of the sequel, *Deer Hunter 2*, are expected to be just as bloated. However technically crude they might be, these games clearly have a mass appeal that no-one else has managed to tap into. And right now just about everyone, from Interplay to Activision to edutainment companies like Simon and Schuster, is trying to figure out just what that appeal is. And so am I, quite frankly.

But thinking about it, and talking to people, I figure I've got it down to three common traits. The first thing *Deer Hunter* and its imitator hunting games have in common, short of dead animals, is low system requirements. As PC games become ever more greedy for powerful graphics technology, the likes of *Deer Hunter* and *African Safari* require nothing of your hardware but a CD-ROM drive, a Pentium processor and a

couple of megabytes of hard drive space. Your word processor probably requires more from your system than a hunting game, and it's this that makes them eminently accessible. Suddenly all those people who refuse to upgrade their PC every year have something they can play.

The second thing that unites the genre is that the games are all incredibly easy – and interminably dull. You don't have to be Thresh to score well in *Deer Hunter*. All that's required of you is a willingness to sit in front of your monitor for hours on end, occasionally clicking the mouse to fire off a shot at a badly drawn representation of Bambi's mum. You may also have to follow a trail of droppings. The lesson here is that if you want to appeal to the masses, keep it simple.

Finally, these games talk to the audience in a language it understands. Sierra's *Field and Stream Trophy Buck* carries a license of the outdoor sports magazine of the same name. Its Web site features links to loads of hunting sites – but, tellingly, no other videogame-related sites. It all goes to show that the mass market may play the occasional videogame, but that the people involved just don't consider themselves gamers. Click on the "Mr Whitetail" link on the *Trophy Buck* site and you get a photo-gallery of dead deer. There's clearly little that's more appealing to the millions of heavily armed middle-Americans.

In the end, the reason the "mainstream" – as we laughingly call them – software houses have such a problem understanding the appeal of the game is that they're not, in fact, used to selling to a mainstream audience. Videogamers, particularly PC gamers, are largely enthusiasts, and they're a very different breed. The people that buy *Deer Hunter* are not the same people who buy *Quake*. They certainly don't buy games magazines, so they've no idea that the mags routinely score their beloved games with the same enthusiasm the hapless deer reserves for a .458 bullet. And nor do they care. They are outside the system, and they don't worry about graphics, or sound quality or frame-rates or any of the other things hardcore gamers care about. And there are millions of these people.

And it's for this reason *Deer Hunter* is much more important than it might look. If gaming is genuinely going to become an entertainment medium for the masses, we need more games with this sort of appeal. In Europe it probably won't be about deer hunting, but what about pub quizzes, or – even better – canal-bank fishing, the most popular participation sport in the UK? This pastime has all the essentials – no need for fine graphics, simple controls, plenty of sitting around staring at an unchanging screen. It could be absolutely huge. And you read it here first.



■ Simon is executive editor of San Francisco's Next Generation magazine.

Daisy, Daisy!

Imagine you're the last man on Earth. You spend all your waking hours battling predatory aliens. Doesn't sound much fun, does it? Luckily, you've got someone warm to come home to.

D

aisy — or rather, Flight Commander Daisy Hernandez — is the boss of the human resistance in DMA Design's *Body Harvest*, on sale now for Nintendo 64. Sure, the hero of the game — and the guy you play — is one Adam Drake, a barrel-chested, sharp-shooting guy in smart orange bio-armour, but he's not the smartest cookie in the barrel. Daisy is the brains of the operation. She stays behind in Alpha Command and, if the worst comes to the worst, she has a tub of Adam's sperm in the fridge. She'll be off-repopulating Earth before the aliens have cracked Adam's torso open to reach the warm and delicious gooey centre. So how did her hair end up that crazy colour? "Her closest friend





and room mate, Elise, dyed it for her the night before the last, big battle against the aliens," reveals DMA Design's Brian Baglow. "Elise was killed and Daisy swore to herself that she would keep her hair 'Misty Plum' forever more.

Well, that's one explanation. It could just be that she was a bit of a goth, and got it dyed before going to see an old Fields of the Nephilim gig on the holodeck."

Fields of the Nephilim? Oh dear. What kind girl is this? "Casually dangerous, intellectually gorgeous," offers Brian. "She studied history, aeronautics, English literature, physics and contemporary dance at university. She had her heart broken at age 17 by an unscrupulous lecturer. His body was found, in pieces, locked inside a cupboard at the bottom of his swimming pool. She flies

spaceships for a living and can kill aliens with anything from a credit card to a nice, hot cup of tea. But really, she just wants to be loved."

That's more like it. So if you were on a date with her, and there was trouble, would she sit back and let you deal with it or immediately wade in and sort it all out herself? "She would sit back and watch you deal with it, a slight smile on her full lips," Brian reckons. "However, if serious danger threatened, she would spring into action like an enraged lioness. Or not. It depends on how much she liked you."

So does she have a boyfriend?

"Daisy never goes out with any guys, even at flight academy. She would often hang around with this good-looking, snobby English lass. They used to explore old ruins together."

■ **Daisy's in Body Harvest,**
developed by DMA Design,
published by Gremlin Interactive,
and rated ★★★ in Arcade 1. 
It's in shops now.



"I think the Spectrum single-handedly created the games scene today."

Clive Sinclair, London, November 1998

Interview by | Mark Green

Sir Clive Sinclair

The ubiquitous inventor on the enduring popularity of his Sinclair Spectrum, the rubbishness of PCs, and why self-flying electric planes are in all of our futures

What's Sir Clive Sinclair best known for in this country? Many readers of *Arcade* would no doubt suggest the Sinclair Spectrum, his seminal 8-bit, rubber-keyed home computer of yesteryear. Most men in the street would probably point, with a suppressed snigger, to the frankly embarrassing C5, his electric buggy of the mid '80s. *News of the World* readers might mention Sir Clive's unlikely reputation as a ladies' man. Everyone, however, would agree that he was big in the 1980s, but the '90s just ain't been his decade.

But now he's back. And, perhaps surprisingly, still concentrating on his personal Moby Dick, the electric vehicle. We met at a swish London penthouse near King's Cross, while David Bailey photographed top-of-the-range models downstairs...

So, what are you working on at the moment, Sir Clive?

It's an ultra-light bicycle that you can fold up and carry about, which is actually a lot harder to make than you'd think. I'm generally very interested in transport – I can see it going all electric over the next few decades. The public is growing increasingly aware of pollution, and highly efficient cars will start to be in heavy demand – the big car companies are already investing in electric cars, because the benefits are so great. After that, it's electric planes and electric airships. I'm very interested in flight, always have been. I like to try and make things that I think won't happen unless I do them.

So you've lost interest in computers completely, then?

Not at all. We're thinking a lot about a new one, but one of the elements that's necessary to make it isn't available yet. Once I've got that, we can get cracking.

So will it be a Spectrum for the '90s?

Yes and no. It'll be a portable PC. At the moment, portables are plugged into your main computer when you get home.

Mine will be designed like the Spectrum – ubiquitous and much more convenient. You won't need another PC, it will do everything you need.

Convenient? So it won't use Windows, then...

No, I'll use something new. Windows is so cumbersome, it restricts the computer and slows down the whole process. The "modern" PC as a whole is such a clumsy design, it's terrible. We really need to break out of that in a big way.

The thing is, right at the beginning of computing, when everything was fresh, all sorts of ideas were being explored that got pushed to one side. Lots of them were golden ideas, which we intend to now revisit, polish up and use.

Let's rewind back to those beginnings. I've heard that you were a bit miffed when the Spectrum ended up as a games machine, and not so much an all-round computer?

Not at all. We didn't intend it to happen that way, but we knew people wanted games, and that's where it went. In fact, I think that the Spectrum single-handedly created the games scene today. I'm sad that there isn't a machine like it now, one that people can easily program for and experiment with. Certainly, if you start having millions of keys and fiddly bits, it's daunting for people and they'll never use it. It needs to be approachable.

Of course, if I was launching it today, I clearly wouldn't do a computer that plugged into your TV and loaded games from tape, but at the time the Spectrum met a need, and many millions were sold.

The Spectrum's built up a bit of a cult following, actually...

Yes, I'm on the Internet now, so I'm aware of that. I think it's a good thing – people should do what they enjoy. It was a golden age, and it's good that people realise what it was like and remember it, so we can pursue that kind of era again.

Why didn't America buy into the Spectrum?

We were selling more computers in the USA than everyone else combined. Until Timex, who we'd distributed through up until then, got the Spectrum license and decided that they knew better than us. They spent a year redesigning it, mucked it up, and lost the market.

Later we sold out to Amstrad. The whole market had got into financial

Clive who?

In 1967, a balding red-haired inventor from Cambridge kick-started his career with a tiny, matchbox-size radio. It didn't do much, but it's what came next that really matters. First a company: Sinclair Research Ltd. Then a stream of cheap, lightweight electrical gear: pocket calculators and portable TVs. Then, in the early 1980s, the range of affordable home computers that would make Clive Sinclair's name: the ZX80, the ZX81 and, of course, the classic ZX Spectrum. For a while they were everywhere, earning their creator nationwide adulation and a knighthood.

Then, catastrophe. The more expensive, business-oriented QL computer and terribly received C5 electric vehicle (the famous small white trike that looked like a bad idea to everyone but Sir Clive) lost him a fortune, and by 1987 Sir Clive had sold his computer firm to Amstrad. A short-lived portable PC, the Z88, was all that was heard from him until 1991, by which time Clive had turned his attention to electric vehicles. So far, there's been the Zeta, a little box that adds electrical assistance to push-bikes, and a proper electric bike, the Zike. He also tinkers with an in-the-ear radio, the X1.

difficulty – not just us, everybody. But I didn't have any regrets, because by then computing had become stagnant. My job has always been in innovation and change, not commodities. And my hobby was never playing with computers.

You don't play games then?

No, but I know a little bit about what's happening. It's very much as I expected it would go. Indeed, in some ways it hasn't got as far as I'd expected. Graphics will go on improving, for example.

But you're quite into artificial intelligence, aren't you?

Yes. It's not being pursued as much as it should be, but I'm astonished by things like *Creatures*. That's fantastic. Very soon you're going to see little robots based on that technology, pets or something like that, which will behave intelligently and which you can talk to. People won't be able to tell the difference between real and artificial intelligence in a few decades.

What about Virtual Reality?

That's actually really disturbing and daunting. When you come out of a VR world, you're not quite sure what's reality and what isn't.

It hasn't really taken off though, and I'm very puzzled by that. Companies like British Aerospace are experimenting with it, but it's so computer intensive that the ordinary PC can't do it. In order to make it available to the public, you'll need some very radical technology. It is possible. I'd be very interested in using it for games, but I would be slightly worried that people might get lost in it.

But transport's your real thing. Electric planes and so on. And after that...?

Personal planes. Once you have GPS [Global Positioning Systems] you can have totally automated planes that take you where you want to go by themselves. Then there'll be space travel for individuals, within ten or 20 years.

Sir Clive's current project is a lightweight folding bicycle.

PHOTOGRAPHY: SHAWN BLOODWORTH



GUNNS



IT'S THE BIGGEST CULT ON
TV. IT'S ON T-SHIRTS,
GREETINGS CARDS,
CUDDLY TOYS. AND NOW,
INEVITABLY, IT'S A GAME.
BEING A SOUTH PARK
GAME, IT'S LOUD AND
BRASH AND CRUDE. BEING
A SOUTH PARK GAME, IT'S
ALSO KIND OF FUNNY...

STORY BY TRAVIS ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY NEIL WEST

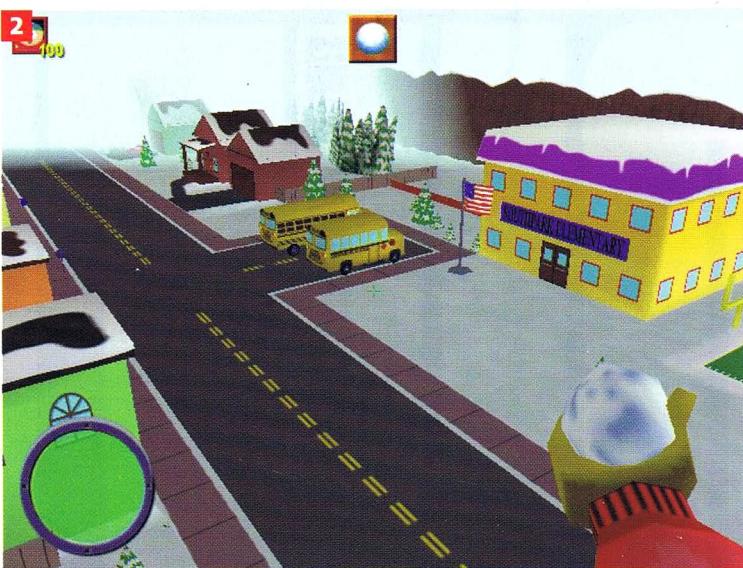


Park Life

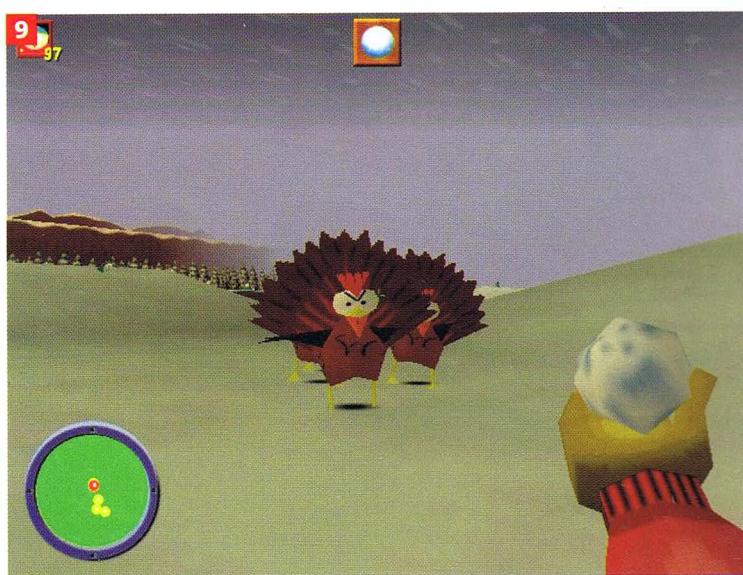
Follow the boys round their home town...

SOUTH
PARK
REVIEWED
IN FULL ON
PAGE 142

■ Considering it had just six months to start and finish programming the *South Park* game, developer Iguana has pulled off a very faithful TV-to-videogame conversion. The move to 3D hasn't affected the characters' appeal one bit, and the violence, swearing, farting and baby-kicking is all here in digitised form.



■ 1) Terrance over there packs quite a fart, we'd imagine. And that chicken's just asking for a taste of Cartman's big gun. 2) As fun and enticing as it looks, snowballing the vehicles and buildings has no effect. But feel free to attack South Park Elementary anyway. 3) Big Gay AI acting strange. Yes, even stranger than usual. 4) Mr Garrison looks so innocent, it's almost painful to have to fire off a cow and watch it sit and wriggle on his head. Almost.



■ 5) It's amazing how much damage a chicken's ass can do. One of the boss characters buys the big one. 6) The auto-targeting function on the cow launcher ensures your bovine friend hits the spot every time. 7) The multi-player game in action. Terrance says, "fart on your grave!" 8) Aww. A cute little bear cub. About to eat snow. Just one of the reasons why this game is "pretty fucked up." 9) Bad turkeys. You'll see too much of them.



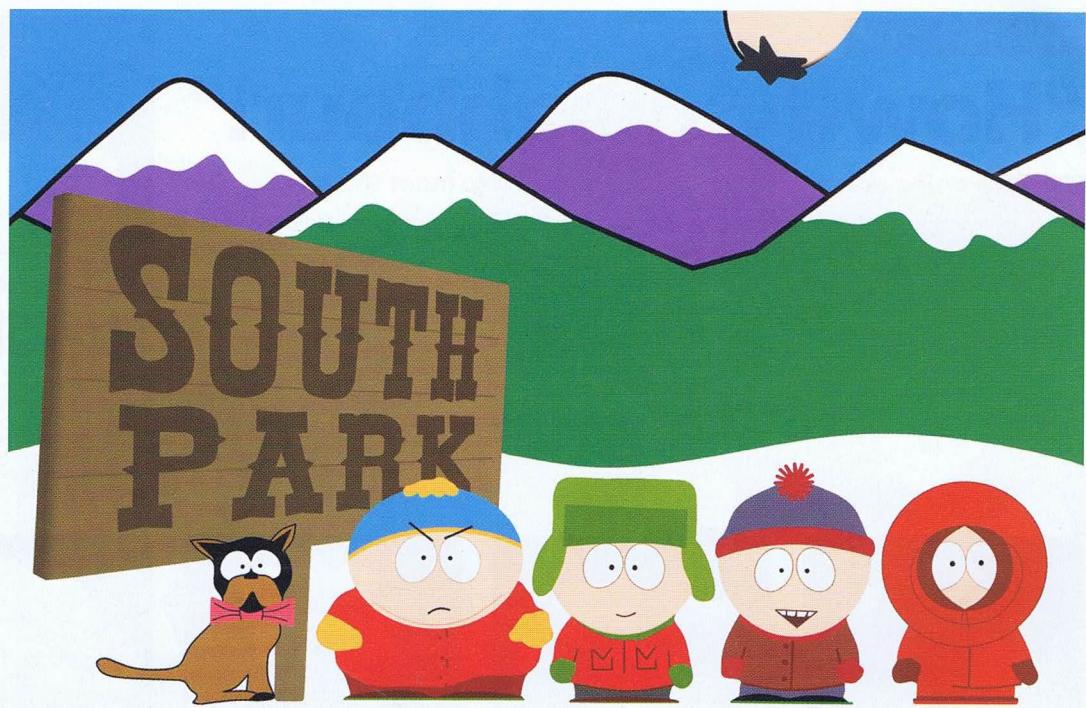
We all know *South Park*, of course – from its Channel 4 run, from the on-going late night Sky broadcasts of the second series, from the countless T-shirts, greetings cards, cuddly toys, and numerous pub bores recounting all the very best bits *ad infinitum*. (And *South Park* really is one you have to see to appreciate – any random lines sound like just, well, filth. Which, of course, they are.) But even if you haven't seen the thing, you must recognise the *South Park* boys' chubby faces – Kyle, Stan, the hapless Kenny and the repulsive, moon-faced Cartman. A videogame was, of course, only a matter of time.

Or, to be accurate, a whole bunch of videogames. Acclaim Entertainment picked up rights to the show a while back – smart move, boys – and set different teams to work on it. There's the Nintendo 64 model, developed by Iguana in the US using the *Turok 2* engine, and the first to reach completion. It'll be released early in February '99, but we've already played it – you can read the world exclusive review on page 142. The PC game is created by the same team, will offer a similar gaming experience (the emphasis is, again, very much on shooting things), and you can check out the first screenshots on the left.

For your information, there's also a PlayStation version further off, plus an entirely different Game Boy Color game by a UK developer, and a different-again game for PC and PlayStation tentatively titled *A Week in South Park*. But if we start going on about any of those, it'll really complicate matters...

But first, the *South Park* back-story. And I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to start off with a bit of a boast. I've been a fan of *South Park* since before the series started. You see, 18 months ago I was visited by the good people of Epic Megagames, in town to show off the latest build of their shooter *Unreal*. As they installed it on my PC, the guys decided to pass the time by showing me a little something extra that they'd burned on to the *Unreal* CD: a short cartoon called *The Spirit of Christmas*. The quality wasn't good – it had obviously been digitised from an umpteenth-generation video copy – but the cartoon itself was hilarious.

In it, Jesus came to Earth and enlisted the help of four children – Stan, Kyle, Kenny and Cartman – to find Santa and kill him for blemishing the meaning of Christmas. And in the ensuing battle, one of the children, Kenny, was decapitated. After an intervention by iconic gay ice skater Brian Boitano, the whole situation was resolved and the true meaning of Christmas revealed (it's getting given presents, of course). The thing was utterly blasphemous, the language was foul, the animation was third-rate at best – and I loved it. When the Megagames guys went



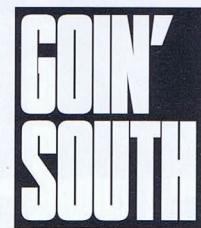
on their way, I was happy for them to delete *Unreal* – but I insisted on keeping a copy of the weird little cartoon.

Yes, it was an early version of *South Park*. The story behind it went something like this: Two film students from the University of Colorado, Matt Stone and Trey Parker, once made a cartoon called *Jesus Vs Frosty*, where some kids made a snowman that came to life and went berserk, killing folk left, right and centre until Jesus turned up and saved the day. This cartoon came to the attention of some executives at America's still fairly new Fox Network, who commissioned Matt and Trey to make a similar short to be sent out as a Christmas card. And thus *The Spirit of Christmas* was created. The "cards" were sent out and went down a storm; legend has it that George Clooney made 300 copies of the animation to give to his friends. It was an instant cult hit, and inevitable that it would mutate into a series sooner or later. That it happened sooner, on the cable channel Comedy Central, is now the stuff of TV history.

As a town, *South Park* is majorly fucked up. The chief of police is a moron, the mayor is a publicity-obsessed narcissist and the people themselves are plain weird. In fact, it's just like real small-town USA, except for the volcanoes, giant robot Barbra Streisands, zombies, mutant turkeys and the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ as a public access TV agony uncle. Seen through the eyes of four eight-year-olds with problems of their own (one of them scheduled to die in an amusing way every week), it all seems perfectly natural. Well, almost.

In actual fact, it's as off-beat as the bizarre Primus theme music suggests, it's as offensive as a TV show can get without actually libelling anyone (although the Streisand episode is a close call) and it's packed with subtle jokes and references guaranteed to

South Park is majorly fucked up. The chief of police is a moron, the mayor is a publicity-obsessed narcissist and the people are weird



please a generation that practically lives with its finger poised on the video "pause" button. It's struck a pretty loud chord in the USA (and more strangely, considering its heavyweight use of obscure cultural stuff, everywhere else in the world that it's been aired) and celebrities are queuing up for guest roles. We've heard George Clooney as Sparky the gay dog, Jay Leno as Cartman's cat (Kitty), Robert Smith of The Cure as Robert Smith of The Cure (and a giant robot moth), and the regular presence of soul man Isaac Hayes as Chef, the kids' mentor. It's a popular show, okay.

Strange then, that for such a popular series it has so few viewers, at least in the USA. For a start, it's only on Comedy Central (none of the major networks would touch something so potentially offensive), which not many people can receive. Viewing figures are minimal – around the five million mark – at least before the extensive on-line viewing audience is taken into account.

Yes, despite the fact that not that many people actually watched it, word about *South Park* spread, and it wasn't long before public-spirited viewers took to digitising entire episodes and posting them on the Internet. That's how I saw most of the first series before it had even aired on Sky, let alone Channel 4. Of course, that's all changed now: in recent weeks Comedy Central has

"Howdy, neighbour!"

If you're going down to South Park, you need to meet the guys...

■ The denizens of *South Park* are a pretty eclectic bunch. The world revolves around the lives of the most unpleasant eight-year-old third-graders that you could ever meet, and the people who impact on their lives. Alongside Stan, Kyle, Cartman, Kenny and Wendy – Stan's vomit-dodging love interest – there's the soulful Chef, and a supporting cast of relatives, teachers, cops and turds. Oh, and did we mention the Son of God yet?



STAN MARSH

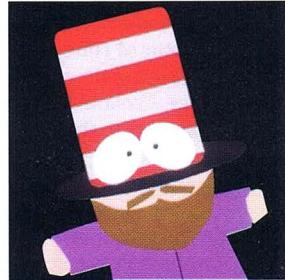
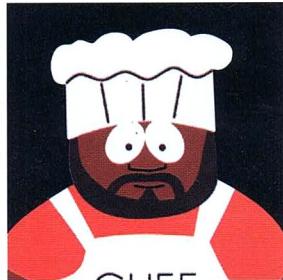
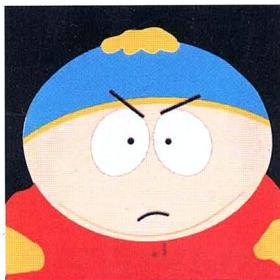
■ If the *South Park* gang has a leader then it's Stan. Quarterback for the school football team, the South Park Cows, he's plagued by his psychotic sister Shelley, and discovered the natural beauty of being gay when it turned out that his dog Sparky, played by George Clooney, was homosexual.

Most likely to say: "Oh my God! They killed Kenny!"

KYLE BROFLOVSKI

■ Kyle's the smart one. Plagued by an interfering mother and a feeling that there's something wrong with him because he's Jewish, he's been locked up in a mental hospital for being a depressive faecalophilic on Prozac. But he's also managed to get an elephant to make love to a pig.

Most likely to say: "You bastards!"



ERIC CARTMAN

■ Cartman's the fat, spoilt one. Stupid, bad-tempered and addicted to Cheesy Poofs, he's been abducted by aliens, sent to Ethiopia by mistake, shot at and ridiculed on *America's Stupidest Home Videos*. His mother's a dirty slut, but does that excuse his dressing up as Hitler for Halloween?

Most likely to say: "Yeah, I want Cheesy Poofs!"

KENNY McCORMICK

■ Kenny's family is very poor, and so God is determined to punish them for that by killing Kenny on a regular basis. He's been trampled by cows, cut in half with a chainsaw, crushed by the Mir space station, frozen, microwaved and touched by Death. He also has a foul mouth on him, if you listen to what he says.

Most likely to say: "Mmph mph mm-mm mph!"

CHEF

■ When the kids need advice, they always go to Chef, voiced by Isaac Hayes. Chef tries to help them out by singing them a song, usually about making sweet love down by the fire. This rarely helps, but soulful old Chef often comes through in the end. Look out for the *Chef Aid* album, out around now and reviewed on page 159 this issue.

Most likely to say: "Oh, fudge!"

MR GARRISON

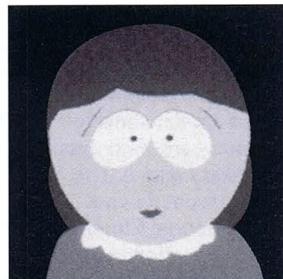
■ As teachers go, Mr Garrison shouldn't. A typical lesson at South Park elementary might consist of a discussion about which TV soap stars are dating each other. Eagle-eyed viewers will notice that his blackboard is often worth reading, especially when there's something potentially slanderous written on it.

Most likely to say: "You go to hell! You go to hell and you die!"

MR HAT

■ Mr Garrison's best friend in the world is a glove puppet. With an alcohol problem and a psychopathic streak a mile wide. That's really all you need to know.

Most likely to say: "KILL THE BITCH!"



WENDY TESTABURGER

■ Stan's girlfriend manages to maintain a relationship with him even though he vomits every time she talks to him. Smart but jealous, she had the school substitute teacher fired into the sun by Iraqis in order to keep her man.

Most likely to say: "Eeeew! Barf is gross!"

UNCLE JIMBO

■ Stan's uncle runs the South Park gun shop, and spends his spare time hunting. His entire attitude to hunting is that if it moves, shoot it, regardless of whether it's a deer or not; it's nice and legal even if the shot animal is a protected species, just so long as it poses an immediate threat.

Most likely to say: "It's coming right at us!"

MRS CARTMAN

■ The final episode of the first season of *South Park* says it all: Cartman's mom is a dirty slut. So, who is Eric Cartman's father? Sky viewers will already know that one; an answer that simply raises a further question that we won't spoil by answering it here. Also seen on the cover of *Crack Whore* magazine.

Most likely to say: "Do you want Cheesy Poofs, hon?"

NED

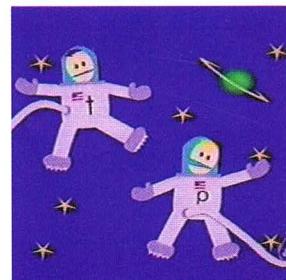
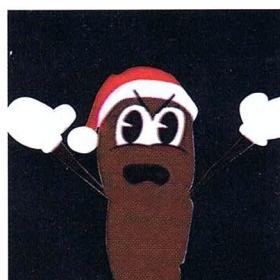
■ Uncle Jimbo's war buddy has one arm and a synthetic voice box; it's not quite enough to stop him bursting into song if the occasion demands it. His rendition of "Kumbaya" is enough to bring a tear to your eye.

Most likely to say (when covered in burning petrol): "Ow. Ow. It hurts."

OFFICER BARBRADY

■ South Park's answer to law enforcement drives a squad car with the phrase "To patronise and annoy" stencilled on the door. Illiterate and utterly stupid, his stubborn arrogance makes up for his shortcomings.

Most likely to say: "Move along, none of this is happening!"



MR HANKEY

■ Do you believe in Mr Hankey? As everyone in *South Park* knows, Mr Hankey the Christmas poo comes out of the toilet every year and brings presents to everyone who has a lot of fibre in their diet, regardless of their religion. Just don't let him kiss you.

Most likely to say: "Howdy ho!"

PIP

■ *South Park*'s only English kid is forced to pay for his strange accent and odd Dickensian garments by being spurned and abused by just about everybody. He briefly found himself a friend in another outsider Damien (spawn of Beelzebub), until Damien realised that the way to get everyone to like him was to abuse Pip.

Most likely to say: "I'll pay \$50 for one!"

MEPHISTO

■ Every town should have its very own mad scientist, and that's Mephisto's. His main line of business is genetic engineering – creating animals with four ares – but he also came in useful when DNA tests were required to discover the identity of Cartman's father.

Most likely to say: "Perhaps I shouldn't be toying with God's creations!"

TERRANCE & PHILLIP

■ Canada's hottest comedy duo are essential viewing for the kids of *South Park*. Their show consists of them farting on each other. Though their show got banned, thanks to the efforts of Kyle's mother, it didn't stop them coming back for a half-hour April Fool special, *Not Without My Anus*.

Most likely to say: "You asshole!"

JESUS

■ After appearing in both of the original short cartoons that spawned *South Park*, it was inevitable that Jesus would turn up in the series. Here he hosts his own public access TV show, probably the best way to help people with their problems.

Most likely to say: "Hello caller? You're on the air!"

started threatening Web sites with legal action if they don't remove their episodes. So now the only way to see *South Park* is to watch it on TV, or buy the videos.

And while you're at the shop buying those videos, you'll probably want to pick up some of the mountains of other *South Park* clobber. These goods have easily overtaken perennial merchandising fave *The Simpsons*. You can wear the T-shirt, cuddle the soft toy, shove the key-ring in your pocket, drink your coffee out of the mug, keep your head warm with the hat, listen to the CD and save the rest of your money to buy a new house in which to put all the other merchandise. Sweet. Oh, and play the game, of course.

In concept, *South Park* on PC is best described as a sort of comedy *Doom*, and is essentially the same game as *South Park* on Nintendo 64 (reviewed this issue) – and, indeed, *South Park* on PlayStation, due by May/June '99. (There is another, completely different game based on the TV show, tentatively titled *A Week in South Park*, it's under development in the US by an outfit called Dreamforge, as well as a possible Game Boy Color game by a bunch of ex-Probe programmers called Crawfish. Both are to be published by Acclaim in '99. We'll have more details in a later issue.) But first to bat is the Iguana version. In it, a comet is on a direct collision course with Earth – aimed right at *South Park*. The proximity of the comet has caused many of the locals to act even more strangely than they do normally. The turkeys on level one will try and kill you. Cartman's mother has been kidnapped by aliens. Big Gay Al has gone bezerk.

All this, however, is merely an excuse to run around attacking each other. As with the Nintendo 64 version, it's the multi-player option on PC *South Park* that provides most of the laughs. Each of the four main Park boys are armed with comedy weapons, and – something that really helps make the game – an entire episode full of sound bites. When hit by a snowball, for instance, each guy will yell one of his trademark expletives. Get the projectiles flying thick and fast, get the volume turned up, and it sounds just like the TV show.

"I think we've created a really funny, enjoyable, entertaining game," grins Iguana's Neill Glancy, its designer. "It really does feel like you're in a kind of virtual *South Park*. Both Matt and Trey got very involved with its development. They looked at all our character design work and animation, and worked on the game's speech script themselves. And, of course, they recorded dialogue."

Deciding what sort of approach should be taken with the game was probably the hardest part of the whole project, Neill reveals.

"*South Park* is an eclectic title, and took some careful thinking for us to translate it into a videogame. All your favourite characters are in there. The four kids are, of course, playable, as well as 20 extra characters including Big Gay Al, Ned, Jimbo, Barbrady, Pip, Starvin'



Marvin, Mrs Cartman, Chef, Mr Garrison and so on. Perhaps essentially, we wanted to capture the bizarre and unpredictable nature of the show in the game's gadgets and gizmos. I mean, what else gives you a cow launcher as a weapon?"

And he's got a point. But what about Matt and Trey? Are they really gamers?

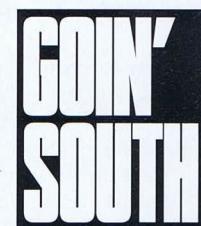
"I know for a fact that both of them are," confirms Neill. "Well, when they have time, that is. Whenever I had meetings with them to talk about the Nintendo version, we'd just end up going on about the current hot games instead. They liked *Unreal*, *Quake*, and *Need for Speed 3*."

Suddenly the reasons behind making *South Park* a *Turok/GoldenEye/Quake*-style deathmatch become clear.

So what's next for *South Park*? Inevitably, there's a film, due for a US release in April. Matt and Trey have already appeared at the cinema as stars of the live-action comedy flop *BASEketball* (a Daryl Zucker film, in which the boys invent a cross between baseball and basketball in their backyard, and it takes over the whole world), and there's talk of getting a release for some of their old film school projects, but *South Park: The Movie* is the big one. Chances are the film will take advantage of its likely 18 certificate. Matt and Trey are adamant that it will really have to push the envelope of acceptability, which means – for one thing – you can expect the kids to be a lot more foul-mouthed than they are on telly. No more pussy-footing around with such light-hearted family-oriented subjects as bestiality, homosexuality, cannibalism, alien abduction, euthanasia and conjoined foetuses: the movie is bound to get as near to the knuckle as you can hope for without losing a multitude of fingers. Hopefully it'll be just like *The Spirit of Christmas*, only 85 minutes longer.

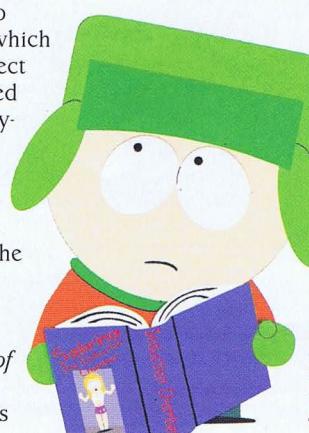
In the meantime, of course, there's

The turkeys on level one will try and kill you. Cartman's mother has been kidnapped by aliens. Big Gay Al has gone bezerk



always the TV original. According to our well-thumbed copy of the *Radio Times*, *South Park* is – as we're going to press – being shown only on Sky One. (There's an episode shown at 11pm each Sunday evening, which is then repeated at 10pm on Monday.) In the New Year, Channel 4 will start airing series two on terrestrial TV – May is the current guesstimate – but you can still expect it to be on pretty late at night, on account of all the swearing. And anal probes. Alternatively if you want to catch up on missed episodes on video, perhaps the best one to buy is *South Park: Volume One*, which features a good introductory pairing, "Cartman Gets An Anal Probe" and "Volcano".

One thing we're certain of: if you've never seen *South Park*, but are intrigued by the game, we reckon you should take a crash course in the show first. After all, this really is one where much of the fun comes from laughing at the characters, and at their obscenities – and probably even shouting back at the screen. But if you don't find "You turkey bastards!" or "This is pretty fucked up right here!" intrinsically funny, perhaps you'd better pass...



■ **Travis is a regular contributor to Arcade. Our review of the N64 *South Park* is on page 142; Trey Parker speaks over the page.**



TREY PARKER

INTERVIEW BY MICHAEL SZYMANSKI

THE SOUTH PARK CO-CREATOR ON HATING BARBRA STREISAND, GIGGLING AT MORMONS AND GENERALLY HAVING HIMSELF A TIME

Trey Parker – the straw-haired one from the Matt Stone/Trey Parker duo that's currently the toast of half of Hollywood, anti-Christ to the other – slumps into the room, hair strewn all over. This is the mind behind *Cannibal! The Musical*, a film which he made by borrowing money and talent from friends and family. Then there's the soon-to-be-cult-classic *Orgazmo*, one in which a Mormon spreading the word stumbles across a porn shoot and becomes a star; the upcoming *South Park* movie; and, of course, the games. Slouched in front of me, in a green oversized shirt he plans to wear on *Jay Leno's Tonight Show* in a few hours, he says he gets by by ignoring his fame as much as possible.

What's funny to you, Trey?

I find everything sort of funny. Especially when we're doing *South Park*, where we're taking something that really shouldn't be funny and we play with it, because everything's got a funny side eventually.

Absolutely anything?

Well, what's so interesting about humour is that people view it in such a wrong way: people get so offended because they think that if you're laughing at something, you hate it. If I laugh at a Mormon, they think I hate Mormons because I'm belittling Mormons, and it's so untrue. Every Mormon I've ever met is a great person. I totally respect them. My first girlfriend was a Mormon! But I can laugh at them and they can laugh at me. It doesn't mean when I laugh at you that I think you're stupid.

So what about the *South Park* episode where Barbra Streisand ends up as a giant robot, and is referred to as a "psychotic, evil mega bitch"?

To me, that is so specifically anti-Barbra Streisand, and so over the top.

that that's what makes the joke. It's funny, because we're going so far out of our way to make fun of her. You know what, I've never met Barbra Streisand. I really don't know what she's like as a person. I don't hate her. But it's funny to say that you do.

South Park has become so huge, so quickly. What do you make of all the fan sites and other stuff that's appeared on the Internet?

The coolest advice I got – and it was kind of early on, just when *South Park* was taking off – was from Mike Judge, creator of *Beavis and Butt-head*. He said, "The biggest thing that you've got to learn now is to ignore all press."

So why are you here talking to me?

Believe me, it's not by choice.

Thanks!

No really, good press or bad press, it doesn't matter. He said, "Don't let the good press go to your head, because if you do the bad press will go to your heart." It's totally true. When *South Park* came out everybody loved it because we were nobodies, because we were one of them. Then *South Park* became huge and we became millionaires, and now everyone hates us. It's exactly what Mike said would happen. So we ignore it.

But on the Internet, it's your fans who are talking, not just critics. What do you think about their comments?

Yeah, but the only way to truly ignore it is to ignore it all. That's what I'm saying, it's sort of a Zen philosophy. If you get too far into the good stuff, then the bad stuff is going to hurt you. Before the show, both Matt and I were big computer freaks. But when it got to the point that no matter what we clicked on, there was a little thing of Cartman coming up, I swear to God, I got really turned off. I don't like going on the Internet any more.

Is it because when you see stuff like that, you feel you're being ripped off?

Not at all. We unleashed *South Park* on to the world, but it's sort of everybody's now. We get taken advantage of in much, much worse ways – like all the dolls and T-shirts that we don't see any money from.

Do you feel yourselves under a lot of pressure to push things further and further with each episode?

I guess there is something of that feeling. But, you know, we've never sat down and thought, "So, what offensive thing can we do this week?" Instead, we've always started from a place where it's more like, "All right, what's another third grade story we can remember?" And I would say to Matt something like, "The biggest thing that happened to me in third grade was that my dog ran away," and he'd say, "Okay, what if we made the dog gay?" And a whole episode would sort of stem from there.

And you never worry about running out of ideas?

Of course we'll run out of stuff. But it might take a while. As long as society is going the way it's going, there'll always be a few more things to throw in. The way it is, we're sort of locked into *South Park* for a while, which is fine, because we love doing it. But when anything else interesting comes about, we try and do that too.

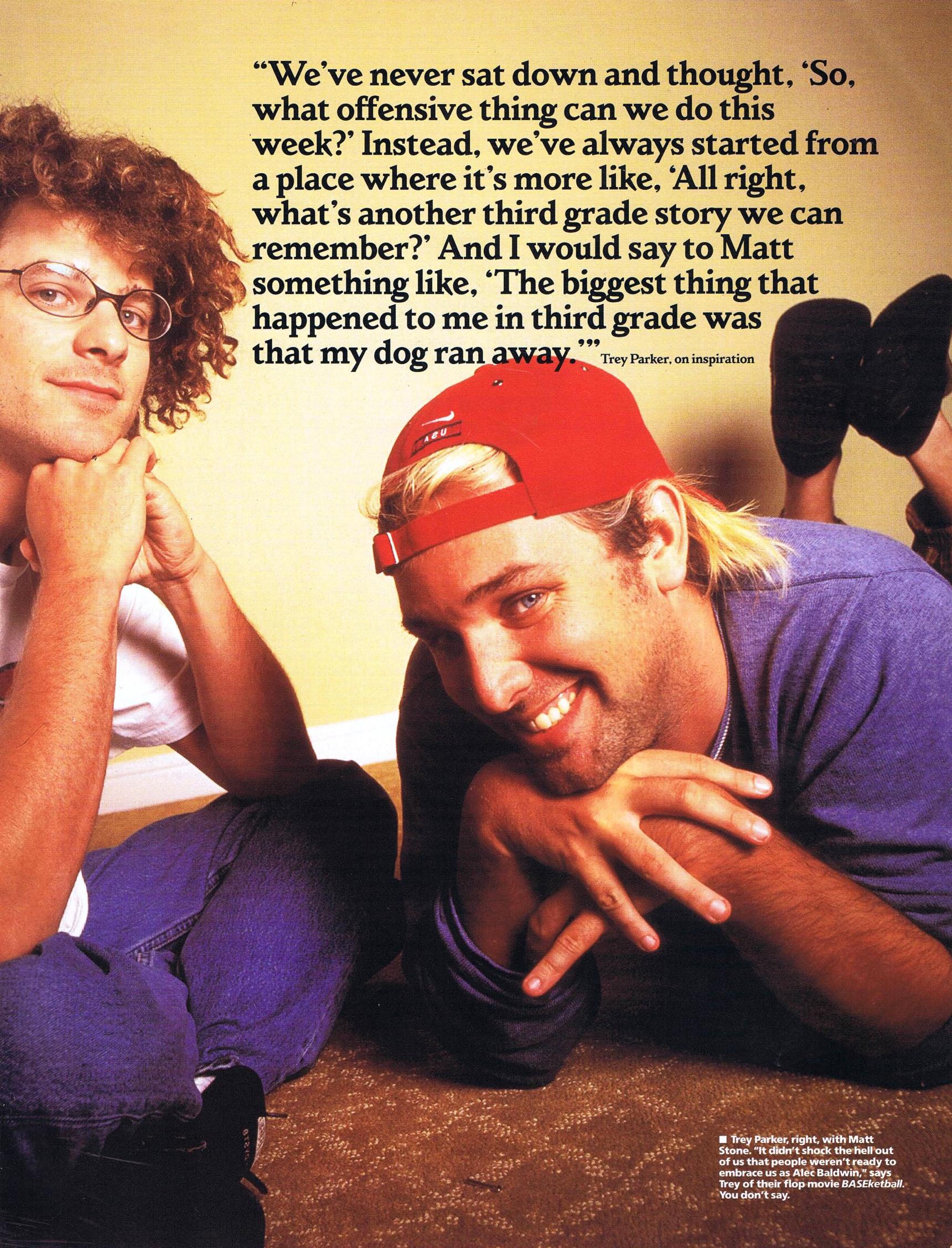
There are lots of gay references in the show. Of the *South Park* kids, which one is most likely to grow up gay?

I think Stan, probably. He's more sensitive, and more in touch with love than anyone else. So I'd say it's probably him.

And which of the little guys is most likely to be a serial killer?

It's so obvious to say Cartman, but oh, it's Kenny, definitely.





“We’ve never sat down and thought, ‘So, what offensive thing can we do this week?’ Instead, we’ve always started from a place where it’s more like, ‘All right, what’s another third grade story we can remember?’ And I would say to Matt something like, ‘The biggest thing that happened to me in third grade was that my dog ran away.’”

Trey Parker, on inspiration

■ Trey Parker, right, with Matt Stone. “It didn’t shock the hell out of us that people weren’t ready to embrace us as Alec Baldwin,” says Trey of their flop movie *BASEketball*. You don’t say.

■ Nell reckons it was
her cropped head
that got her noticed.
We're not so sure.



Nell McAndrew

Interview by | Matt Bielby

Tomb Raider's "real-life Lara Croft" on rubber outfits, damp seats, shaved heads and why her men need a whole lot more to them than just nifty joypad skills

She's very nice. That's the first thing anyone ever says to you about Nell McAndrew, and you know, I think they're probably right. Not for her the reported prima donnish behaviour exhibited by the last "real life Lara Croft", the sometime actress Rhona Mitre. Instead, the Leeds-born 24-year-old is infectiously friendly, eager to please – and she comes blessed, unfortunately, with the sort of Mel B accent that makes landing the lead in the upcoming *Tomb Raider* movie a longshot at best. "If they want me to be her, I'd better go for elocution lessons! Which I'm willing to do..." she says, and then starts laughing. We both know it's something that'll never happen, but it's a nice thought.

What hoops did you have to jump through to get the part of Ms Croft? Did EIDOS make you prance around, pretending to be Lara?

Yeah, with the guns and everything! There were 150 girls up for it, and I didn't have any hair at the time, so I was amazed I got the job. But I was the right height, the right build, and they needed somebody who could do personal appearances, and get along with everybody.

I just knew it was something I could do. And it's great wearing the Lara outfit. It always makes me feel very powerful and strong – it's like, "Don't stand in my way!"

Bit sticky though?

Yeah! I get really hot and sweaty, and it's really not that attractive. I end up leaving little wet patches on every seat! And then they all fight over it! One time they wanted to auction off this damp chair, and I'm going, "Yuck, don't be so gross!"

They've actually made me about 20 of those rubber Lara outfits, all the same style, because I get through them so fast. They have to be rinsed through and then cleaned up each time I wear them. I'm supposed to be having a new design

The story so far...

■ Nell's 24, she's from Leeds, and she is – for those who care about such things – 32D-25-36. (In other words, she's probably younger than Lara, certainly more northern, and slightly less stacked. But then, what woman isn't?) Inspired as a kid by the dancers on *Top of the Pops*, she signed with a Manchester modelling agent or a hairdresser's prompting, worked at a bank for a year, then decided to "Sod it" and give full-time modelling a try. "I took a gamble really," she says. "The bank was good, but not forever." The early jobs weren't always great – things like giving out leaflets in the street – though she did rather enjoy dressing up in a shortie Santa suit at Leeds' Queen's Hotel. Then came work for Adidas and Next, the TV show *Man O' Man*, a relocation to London, backing dancing for Lisa Marie, the shaved head, Lara – and

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made, actually, but I haven't seen it yet. What I'd really like to is the combat-pant-and-bra-top outfit from the new game – it looks much easier to wear. And I love the black Gucci bikini, too. I'd wear that at shows, no problem!

You've been on TV a few times now. What might we have seen you in?

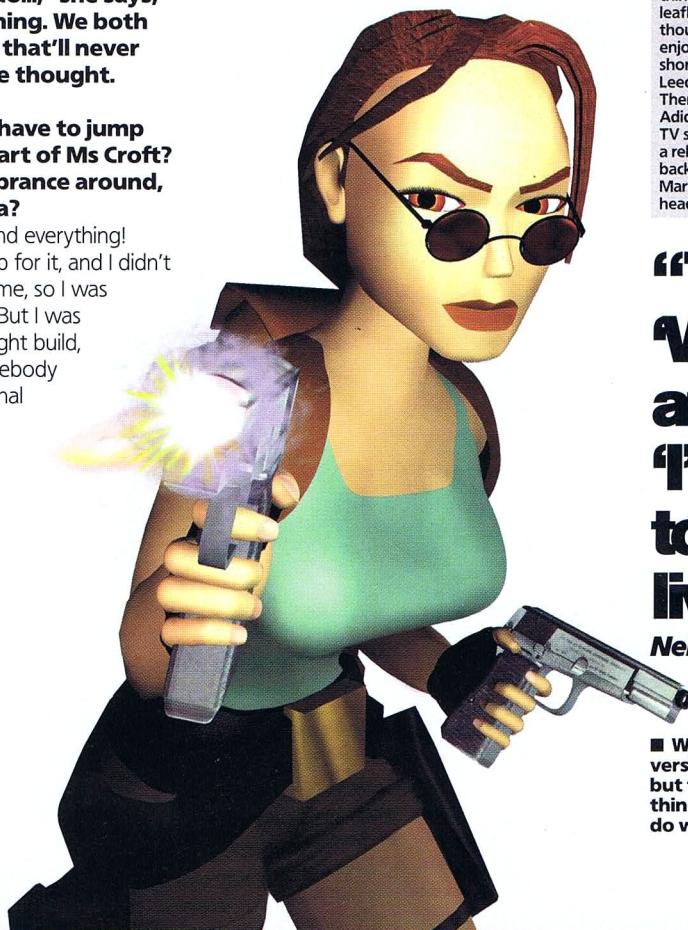
Well, Johnny and Denise interviewed me on *The Big Breakfast* recently, and then ages ago I was on *TFI Friday* as the Lord of Love's inspiration. You remember that? I had to sit really close, and look him in the eyes, and he'd tell me that I was his inspiration – and meanwhile, there in the background, you've got all the guests trying to make me laugh. This Christmas I'm in a TV movie as Neil Morrissey's body double – he's playing a transsexual. But the best thing I've done was a Chris Tarrant show called *Man O' Man*. I was one of ten girls, and we had to push all these men into a swimming pool. The guys always fell in, every single time we shoved them – it was just like, "Get in there!"

PHOTOGRAPHY: REX FEATURES

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"They say things like 'Will you marry me?', and the girls moan, 'I've lost my boyfriend to you.' It's part of their lives, Tomb Raider."

Nell McAndrew, on being the public face of Lara

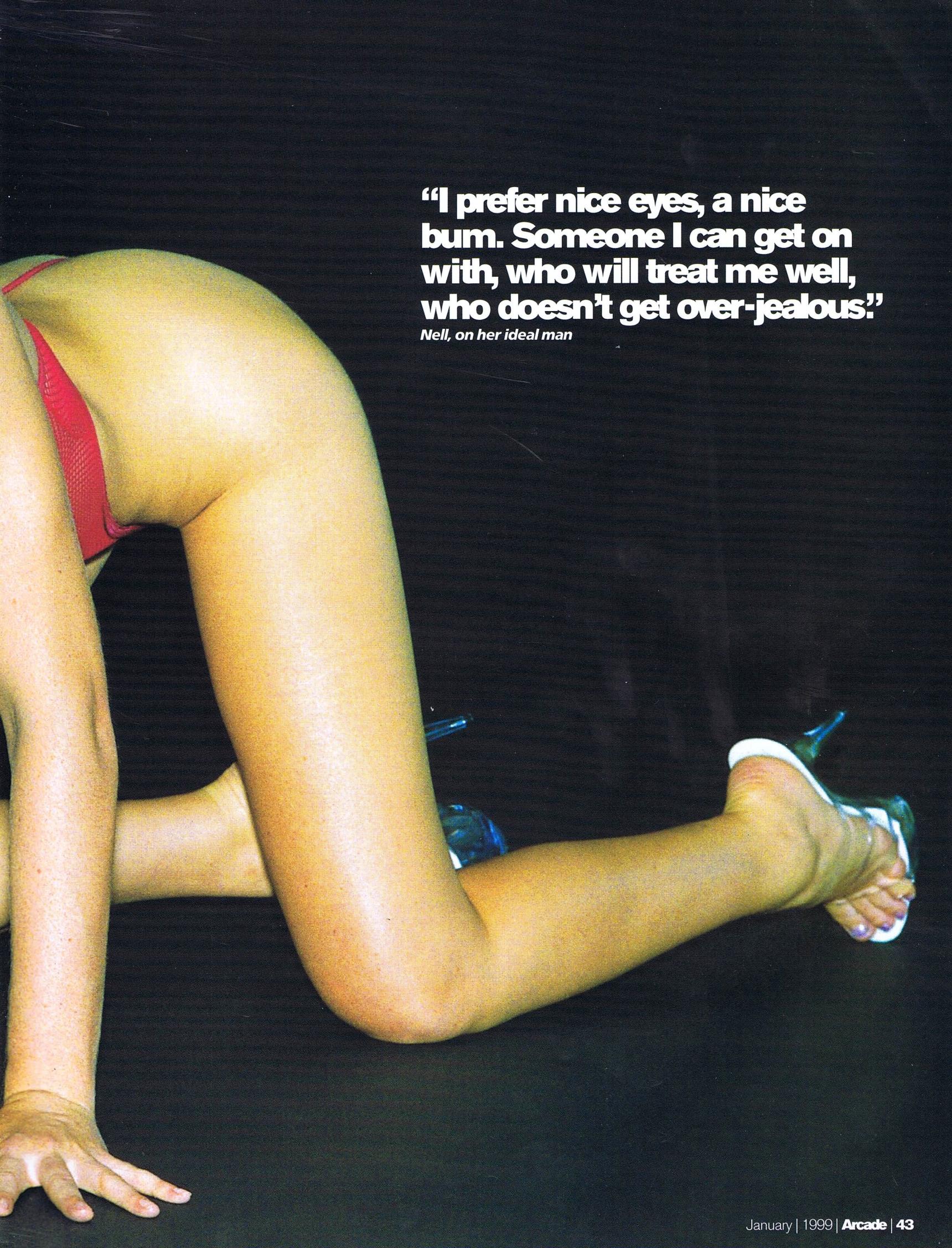


■ We love the game version of Ms Croft, but there are some things you just can't do with polygons.

Nell McAndrew



■ "Nobody move.
That contact lens
has to be around
here somewhere."

A photograph of a woman in a black top and red pants performing a dance move. She is leaning back, with one leg bent and her foot resting against her knee. Her arms are extended, and she is wearing white sneakers. The background is dark.

"I prefer nice eyes, a nice bum. Someone I can get on with, who will treat me well, who doesn't get over-jealous."

Nell, on her ideal man

Nell McAndrew

"I'm very independent. I'm happy doing everything myself. I'm quite sporty, I like to work out and go cycling, and I like a challenge."

Nell, on life



■ "Does my bum look big in this?"

■ Somehow we've ended up profiling two slap-heads this month...



A full-page photograph of a woman with short blonde hair, wearing a green lace lingerie set. She is leaning back with her arms behind her head, looking over her shoulder at the camera. The background is a soft-focus indoor setting.

■ Analysts had long speculated over the kind of support Ms Croft needed to get her through those arduous missions...

"Lara has made me realise how many different things there are to do in life, and how it's a shame if you don't do as many of them as possible!"

Nell, on how Lara changed her world

41 Lately, though, I've found out that I've really been enjoying radio. You can go on and pull faces and nobody can see it, and better still you don't have to turn up looking immaculate. It's just the thing if you've been out on the town the night before!

You first came into the public eye when you shaved your hair off. So what was that all about?

I was sick of bad hair days, so I just went for it. It's better to get it out of the way while I'm still young, eh? I always used to bleach my hair, and I liked it when it was bright blonde, but sometimes I'd get it done and it'd be this awful yellow and I'd get really upset. One day I was on holiday in Tenerife, with my boyfriend at the time, and he said, "Look, if you're going to shave it, let me do it for you". So we did. When I woke up in the morning, it looked like he'd shrunk me head! And it was all white, so it didn't blend in with my body – it looked a lot better when I got a bit of a tan on it. When I got home my agent didn't know what to do with me, and I had to cancel some jobs, so it could have been a real disaster. But I got so much publicity out of it – I was in the *Daily Star* and everything – that it turned out to be a really good move. That was probably the most famous I got, before the Lara thing came along.

How do Tomb Raider fans act when they meet you? Do they go wild?

Oh, they're brilliant. They go mad, they go mental. It's like being a pop star. They say things like, "Will you marry me?", and the girls moan, "I've lost my boyfriend to you." It's part of their lives, *Tomb Raider*. But the very best thing is going to big computer shows like E3 in America, and mixing with all these computer boffins. It's like a whole new world to me. I'm learning a lot – to start off I knew hardly anything about *Tomb Raider III*, let alone all the things you have to go through to

make a videogame, but from all the press conferences I've been to I feel like I know everything now. I've not completed the game or anything, but reckon I know more about *Tomb Raider* than anything!

So how much of it have you played?

Not that much, a few levels – I still don't have a PlayStation! I keep asking EIDOS for one, but they haven't coughed up yet, so I'm going to march in there next week with a big sports bag and demand they fill it up with a console and heaps of games. It is nearly Christmas, after all.

So has any guy impressed you with his amazing gameplaying skills?

Not yet! I'd have to say I prefer nice eyes, a nice bum. You know? Someone I can get on with, who

More story so far...

► then the ultimate accolade, a very fine Web site presence (she's generally to be found sandwiched between *Species* girl Natasha Henstridge and *Baywatch*'s Nichole Eggert – an intriguing thought if ever there was one). Indeed, we may finally get to see an official Nell McAndrew site sometime next year. She's been in modelling seven years now, "and am enjoying it more than I ever have done. Lara's been good to me, I've been everywhere and in everything. You're going to get sick of seeing me, you are."

Dunno about that, Nell. We've got a fair way to go yet.

will treat me well, who doesn't get over-jealous. Though to some extent him getting jealous is nice – it shows he cares. I guess my top all-time favourite has to be Al Pacino, but I really like a whole mixture of men. He doesn't have to be over-muscle, just a nice toned body, like he might want to come to the gym with me now and again. He'd have to if he wanted to see me, because I live down there! He can play videogames if he wants, but not 24 hours a day. I would not be impressed!

So how much are you like Lara? Do you think you'd get on with her if you met her?

I'd certainly be very intrigued to meet her. Mind you, I'm sure there're a lot of men out there who'd like to meet her if she was real too! She'd probably be very into herself, I get the impression she likes her own company a great deal. You know, she's happy to go off on an adventure on her own, and probably isn't really that bothered about any male company. Then, when she's succeeded, she'll maybe, just maybe, treat herself to one. I don't know.

As for me, I'm most like Lara in that I'm very independent. I'm happy doing everything myself. I'm quite sporty, I like to work out and go running and cycling, and I like a challenge. Playing the part of Lara has really made me realise there're so many things that I want to do, and it's given me the initiative to go out and do them. In Australia I was asked to turn up to this party on a Harley-Davidson, and I said I'd love to, but I can't ride it. So next year I'm going to learn how. I want to learn abseiling, too, and I'd love to do a parachute jump. Lara has made me realise how many different things there are to do in life, and how it's a real shame if you don't try and do as many of them as possible.

So it's a high-flying kind of a lifestyle you've got now, then.

Yeah, but I'll tell you the best thing. I was put up for this Yorkshire Young Achiever award the other day, it's at charity do in Leeds, and I went to the ceremony with me mam. And she loved it – she won a meal in a raffle. It's very hard to imagine the real Lara getting all excited about a raffle, but I was. You see, I might try, but I'm not exactly like her... 

■ Look for Nell in a blink-and-you'll-miss-her role in the Neil Morrissey/Martin Clunes Christmas TV movie, *Hunting Venus*.



■ Most living rooms are dominated by the TV set. Andrew Baker's, on the other hand...



■ PHOTOGRAPHY: ROB SCOTT, JUSTIN SCOBIE

HOUSE OF GAMES

STORY BY SIMON KIRKANE

GAME CONSOLES ARE ALL VERY WELL, BUT THEY DON'T DOMINATE THE ROOM LIKE A COIN-OP. YOU CAN'T PLAY THEM STANDING UP LIKE IN AN ARCADE. AND YOU CAN'T GIVE 'EM A KICK WHEN YOU GET IT HORRIBLY WRONG. FOR SOME PEOPLE THERE JUST AIN'T NO SUBSTITUTE FOR A REAL COIN-OP IN THE HOUSE, AND THEIR NUMBERS ARE GROWING...

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ere's the ideal: every house comes with its own fully-equipped games room, its den. There's your full-sized snooker table - that's the room's centre piece. There's table football, and air hockey. On the wall there's a dart board (with proper floor markings, natch), and a basketball hoop. And next to them, in a neat little row, there's a bunch of classic arcade machines. It's fantasyland, right?

The problem is that most of us live in houses or flats with no room for table football, let alone a snooker table. But coin-ops are a different story. If you've got room for a nice big stereo or a drinks cabinet, you've got room for a coin-op. Of course, persuading your other half that slapping a *Pac-Man* machine where they think a sideboard or writing bureau should be could prove easier said than done. But in theory, it's a breeze.

So, let's meet the men who've lived the theory.

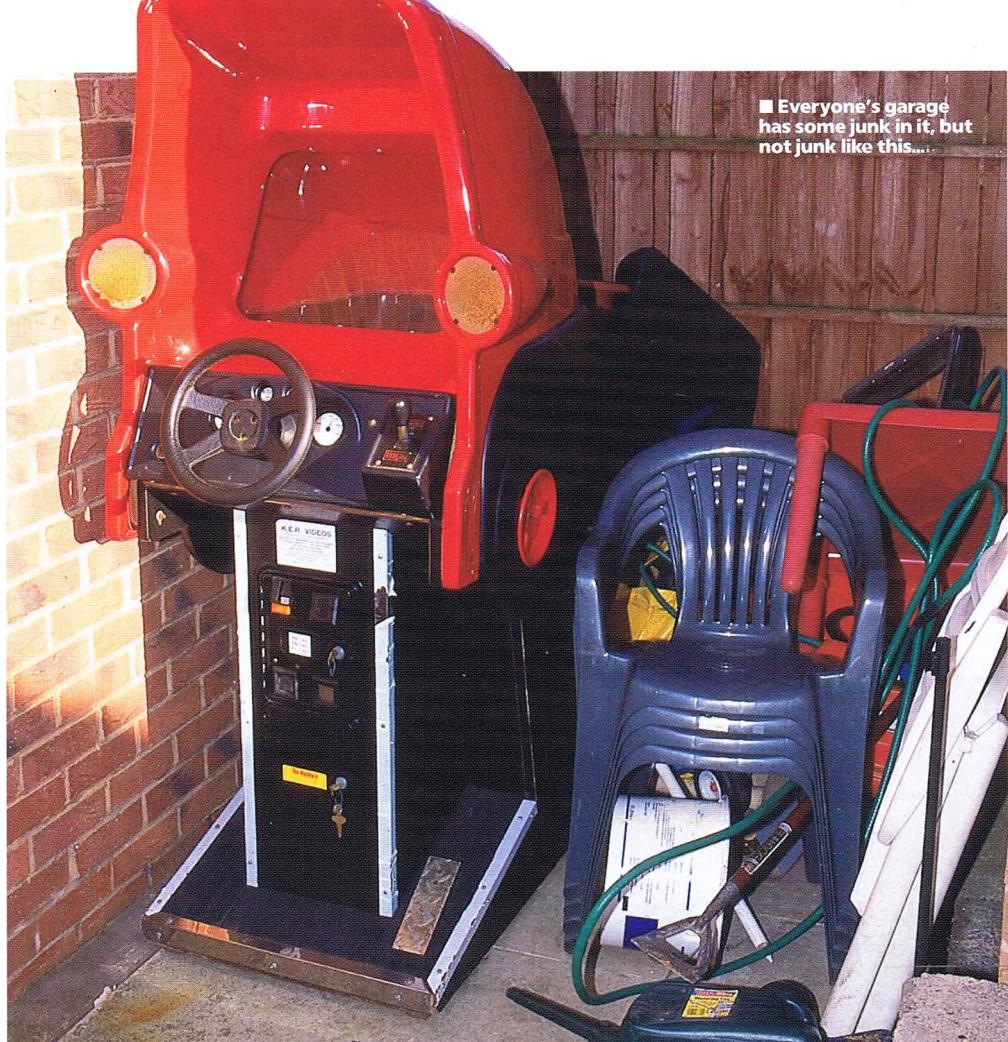
Over the next few pages, Andrew Baker, Chris Jackson and Simon Wilson - three enthusiasts who've let coin-ops take over their lives - talk about how they got the arcade machine bug, and give us their personal recommendations. Plus, we have their expert advice on what to buy and how

Coin-ops are a different story. If you've got room for a nice big stereo or a drinks cabinet, you've got room for a coin-op

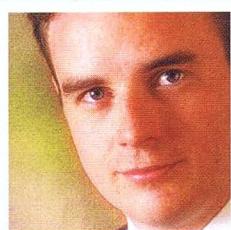
much to pay; and they tell you what to check when purchasing your own machine. A word of advice from all of them - coin-op collecting is habit forming. You could soon find it develops into an addiction...

First off, the good news. Though the coolest thing you can own (this side of a spanking new *SpikeOut* machine or something) is probably £1,500 of original Taito *Space Invaders* cabinet, collecting coin-ops doesn't have to be a hobby for rich men only. On the contrary, you can get rather less sought after machines - something like *Vulcan Venture*, say - for a bargain basement £150. And, for a bit more money, you can get an alternative printed circuit board (PCB) or two to swap with *Vulcan Venture* when you get bored of it.

Sounds cheap, doesn't it? Sounds like everyone should be doing it, right? But they're not, and there are a few



■ Everyone's garage has some junk in it, but not junk like this....



"As a teenager I must have put hundreds of quid into it..."

Andrew Baker's love of Double Dragon started an international business...

■ Andrew Baker's first foray into cabinet collecting came during a quest for a fruit machine. Working on the assumption that having a fruitie in his home would be more economical than banging his readies away down his local pub, Andrew set off to buy one - and returned home with an arcade's-worth of game coin-ops. "When I went to pick up the fruit machine and saw a warehouse full of old videogames, I just couldn't help myself. I bought the lot - about 50 game boards and 20-plus cabinets. The idea was that I'd start selling them on locally, but through the Internet the business swiftly became national, then international. We now have customers in Korea, Hong Kong, America and Germany."

Andrew gets many of his old boards and cabinets from outfits that deal in big-money, up-to-the-minute kit. The problem is, these guys usually only sell in bulk, and sight unseen. One day Andrew got home with a new batch of game boards and found that ten of them were *World Cup '90* and another five were *Lethal Enforcers* - and all of them without the light gun. A disappointing haul - but, of course, he might just as easily have lucked across some lost classic.

In the early days, Andrew sold his machines to a mixture of mates and local kebab houses, but soon found that this was too much hassle with little or no payback. He was just about ready to jettison it when, in a last ditch attempt, he decided to

advertise his wares on the Internet - and he hasn't looked back since.

"You can spend the same as you would on a PlayStation and a handful of games getting an arcade machine," he argues, "but a year down the line it's worth £100 more than you bought it for, while your PlayStation has either been replaced by a new system or taken a massive price drop. You won't lose money on game boards. If you bought *Pac-Man* today for £100, in six months' time when you're bored with it you can part exchange it or sell it for £100 or more."

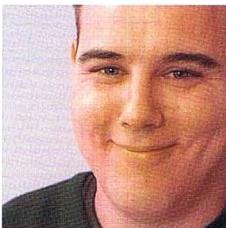
You can't fault his logic. "The game I say I'll never sell," he says, "and the first one I bought, was *Double Dragon*. I was at a supplier and noticed it sitting in a

pile of games that were to be thrown out. As a teenager I must have put hundreds of quid into it, and all the home computer versions I'd seen were pants, so I couldn't believe my luck. I guess I played it for a few hours every night after that, with the wife. Soon we'd got so good we changed the rules to force us to complete the game without losing a life, then to completing it without getting hit."

"The advice I'd give to anyone buying a machine is to play it like you would at an arcade - put money into it, so you don't finish it in a day. That way you won't get bored of it quickly."

■ Contact: 0374 157648
■ <http://freespace.virgin.net/andrew.baker3/games.html>

■ "Well, it beats doing the washing up..." Happily, Mrs Jackson and daughter approve.



"It turned out it had been stood in a farmer's field for about six months..."

For Chris Jackson, five abandoned cocktail cabinets started his obsession with repairing and selling on coin-ups.

■ Chris Jackson got into arcade machines totally by accident. You know how it is – you see something (in his case a load of cocktail cabinets sitting unloved in someone's back garden), you ask out of curiosity how much it would be to buy one, and you end up going home with all five of the things. The original owner had intended to chuck them in a skip; now Chris had the coin-ops lined up in his garage, and no ideas. "I took them because I thought I might be able to do something with them, but I didn't know what."

The answer, of course, was to get into the coin-op business, albeit it at the level of enthusiastic

amateur. Chris was and is a printer by trade, and buying and supplying arcade games remains only a hobby, although one he admits he'd get a kick out of doing full time. "I don't really do it for profit, I just love it – going out and coming back with a load of new games and testing them is one of the best things." Sitting in his house, packed with obscure coin-ops, it's easy to see what he means.

But dedicated though he is, the lengths some people will go to to get hold of their favourite games still amazes him. Chris takes a lot of international enquiries – his biggest customer is a collector in Germany, but he's had

interest from America and elsewhere – with most people hearing of him through his Website. If people want something, they're willing to pay for it. On Chris's site he currently has on sale a Star Wars top marquee (the lit logo above the screen) for £50. Yes, £50 for an obsolete sign.

Chris's best discovery came when he saw a sign reading, "Star Wars Machine For Sale, Not Working, £20".

"I still didn't know much about arcade games at the time, but I knew enough to realise I'd struck lucky when the guy told me it was a complete, sit-down cockpit machine. After picking myself off the floor, I arranged for him to deliver

it the next day – it arrived, and I couldn't believe how big it was."

Unfortunately, however, the thing refused to work.

"During the next day or so I set about finding out what was wrong with it. It turned out it had been stood in a farmer's field for about six months, and was badly water damaged at the bottom of the cabinet. The electronics were in a bad way too but, after checking the wiring and making sure that everything was connected properly, I turned the power on and stood well back. Risky, and not to be recommended, but I did it. A low humming noise rose from the depths of the machine, but no

bangs or sparks. I remember thinking, 'Good start.'

"But the monitor still wasn't working. I checked for other signs of life, opened up the coin mechanism and pressed the credit button. Nothing happened, and my heart sank. Then, just as I was losing hope, 'Red Five standing by' came from the speakers. Fantastic! I jumped into the cockpit and started blindly moving the controls around and firing. Sure enough the music started and nothing else. I played the game for the next two weeks with no picture on the screen, just happy to hear the sound come alive."

It took Chris six months, and the purchase of an

upright, £150 Empire Strikes Back machine, to get the Star Wars coin-op back into working condition. By stripping the entire insides out of the upright and then transplanting them into the cockpit model, the larger machine was at last a going concern. "And the best thing was that when I'd finished I could swap the two PCBs around in the cockpit cabinet whenever I fancied! These days my house is full of coin-ops, but I still wish I had that Star Wars machine. For some reason I swapped it for a pinball table, and it's a decision I'll always regret."

■ Contact 01977 662276
■ <http://homepages.which.net/chris.jackson2/>

50 obvious reasons why. First and foremost is that knowing where to get hold of your coin-op ain't always easy. Yes, there are warehouses up and down the country full-to-bursting with dedicated cabinets from the late '70s and early '80s, but generally the people who run them can't be bothered dealing with the unwashed mass of the British Public. And why should they mess around selling to the private punter, when they can flog a £30,000 state-of-the-art coin-op one week and a batch of 40 £800 games the next?

Because of this almost complete disinterest from the coin-op establishment, a number of enthusiasts have set themselves up as dealers and part-time dealers to service punters like you and me. It's down to guys like this that so many classic arcade machines are still in service and available – and when you see the machine that stole your childhood in one of their garages at a knock-down price... Well, you'd need to be a better man than us to resist.

WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU BUYING?

When you buy an old arcade machine from a classic coin-op dealer, chances are that what you'll be getting is a JAMMA cabinet. This is your basic Japanese Arcade Machine Manufacturers Association unit, and was an industry godsend when it first appeared in the mid-to-late-'80s. Why? Well, imagine you're an arcade manager. Pre-JAMMA, you'd get your hands on a fully dedicated *Pac-Man* cabinet, and a year later you'd cart it away, an obsolete wreck, to make way for the new *Ms Pac-Man* or whatever. Not so with JAMMA. Now you could keep the old cabinet exactly where it was, but by replacing the stickers on the side and fitting a new printed circuit board (or PCB – the actual game itself), it looked like you'd got a brand new one. Suddenly it was just like slotting a giant Nintendo cartridge into a giant Nintendo 64.

And what worked for '80s arcades can work for you too. Because coin-op machine cabinets weigh in at eight stones and more (they have big weights at the bottom to stop them toppling over), and there's limited space available in your dining room (you'll need six feet of headroom, plus floorspace of two feet by two feet, plus standing room), the less you have to move one of the buggers about the better. JAMMA means you probably won't have to. Get your £150 coin-op, put it where you want it, and when you get bored of it, splash out anything from £20 to £200 or so to replace the inner workings. All you need do is turn the machine off and exchange the PCBs – it's the ultimate home console.

Of course, there are other machine standards. There is also Nintendo's old multigame cabinet – little more than a NES with the ability to rotate 30 games – and the Neo-Geo cabinet, which worked in a similar way to the JAMMA. With these, though, you slotted in an actual cartridge



■ Before you hand over your hard-earned, check for screen burn, dodgy wiring, cigarette burns... and that the whole damn thing works.

HOUSE OF GAMES





The easy way to play arcade games at home, using Simon Wilson's Multisystem convertor.



"These machines are pretty old, there can be plenty of problems with them..."

Simon Wilson brings the whole coin-op arcade experience into your home – using a converter and your TV.

"I owned the original *Space Invaders* table-top video machine when I was 15," says coin-op dealer Simon Wilson. "I'd seen it down the local arcade, and ended up paying the guy there £100 for it. Later on, I sold it for about the same price. But if I wanted to buy it back again now, we would probably be talking over £1,500."

These days, though a company called Dellfern, Simon runs a thriving coin-

op-based business. He leaves the actual cabinets themselves to other operators – moving them around has simply proved too much hassle. (One day he sold one to some bloke and took it to his living room, only to realise the chap hadn't told anyone in his house what they were going to be sharing living space with. Never again.)

No, these days he markets something called Multisystem XXX, a PCB-TV

converter that enables you to play your arcade board through a bog-standard telly. While purists might balk, it has to be the easiest way to bring the arcade experience into your home.

"Although nowadays I'm more interested in the business side of things," Simon admits, "I still get a kick out of playing the machines. The best thing about owning a coin-op is that you're playing the real thing. It's not a

simulation of the game you want to play – it's the original. The only downside is that it weighs a bit more than a PlayStation..."

Simon's main piece of advice to anyone thinking of getting a home coin-op is to make sure that the dealer you buy from is genuine and helpful, not some take-the-money-and-run merchant. "Ask him if he can help out if you have any problems," he warns. "Can you call him for advice?"

I myself have three skilled technicians working full-time for me, so if one of my customers rings me with a problem a technician can usually help over the phone. And since these machines are pretty old, there can be plenty of problems with them. Also, if you are searching by phone or on the Internet, check that the supplier is in your area. If not, and they don't supply transport, you can be in for a painful time getting the

thing back to your house. It's best to think these things through before you waste their time or yours."

■ Contact: 01384 444570
■ Fax: 01384 444573
■ E-mail: dellfern@compuserve.com

52 instead of a PCB when the game needed changing. Both systems have their advocates, but for most of us JAMMA is the thing.

Or you may come across one of the old dedicated cabinets instead. In the early days of *Tempest*, *Pac-Man* and *Star Wars* (with its vector graphics and one-off screen), the dedicated cabinets were king. Though JAMMA effectively rendered many of them obsolete, these remain the games for the purist, and because of that prices for the most popular machines have risen accordingly: in November a dedicated *Defender* sold in the US for £1,000, and was considered a bargain. Still, you never know – it's always possible that that bloke you met with a lockup in Neasden has 30 of them hanging around...

Before you start to splash the cash, though, do as much Internet-based research as possible – and though there are a few UK-based coin-op pages, this means checking out the States. Ever wondered which is the best path to take in *Pac-Man* to get maximum points, which of the giant coin-op auctions that are cropping up is best to go to, or why the *Star Wars* vector screens are so difficult to come by? Look to America to tell you.

What it won't tell you, however – not with any conviction – is what to pay. There are no real cost standards for these things, so you might pick up a

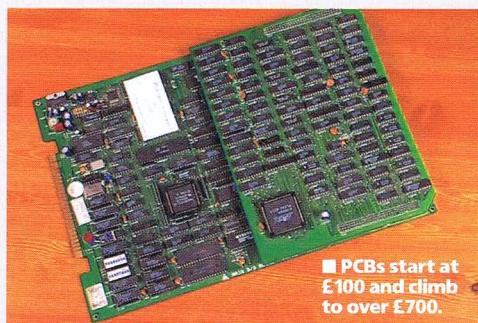
After-sales service is touch and go too – you might buy your game, get it home, switch it on and nothing happens

rare, sit-down *R-Type* cabinet (in industry parlance, sit-downs are known as "cocktail" cabinets) from a dealer for £1,500, then see the exact same machine for £300 two days later in *Exchange and Mart*. After-sales service is touch and go too – you might buy your game, get it home, switch it on and nothing happens, then find your dealer doesn't want to know. We could be talking about a 20-year-old game, after all, and they're unlikely to come with a warranty.

Here in the UK we're still a long way behind the US in terms of private coin-op ownership, but general opinion has it that 1998 saw a marked increase in the number of people interested in buying their own. As more people get involved, it can only mean more dealers – and that means more back-up if anything goes wrong. Right now, while prices are quite low and the supply reasonably plentiful, is an ideal time to get involved. Go on, take the plunge.

What to pay

A rough guide to how much you should expect to shell out for games...



Up to £100

This is the starting price for game printed circuit boards (PCBs). We've seen pretty unpopular games in poor condition go for as little as £20, with £50-£100 being the going rate for many late '80s, or early '90s, efforts. Cheap cabinets come in at under £100 too, but they'll need cleaning up – likely as not, they'll have been standing in some greasy kebab shop or at the back of a warehouse for the last six months.

Up to £200

A mint condition stand-up cabinet with a 20-inch monitor and stickers should sell for around £150. Most PCBs come at around the same price, with an average-to-popular game in good condition going for up to £200. But this can vary wildly: one minute everyone might tell you *Tempest* is an unattainable board, the next it'll crop up at around £200.

Up to £300

You should be thinking around the £250 mark for mint condition stand-up cabinet with a 26-inch monitor and stickers. The same amount will get you a PCB from a few years back – such as *Tekken 2*.

Up to £400

Mint condition sit-down (or "cocktail") cabinets start at around £350 without a game board, though scrappier examples can be much cheaper (we've seen them go for as little as £25).

Up to £600

Around £550-£600 should see you walking away with the PCB for a popular beat-'em-up such as *Tekken 3*.

Up to £1,000

Complete, original versions of classic, much-loved games can go for high three-figure prices. Shop around though – you may be able to get hold of them for significantly less. The PCB for most recent coin-ops will go for £700 or so.

Up to £2,000

A cabinet with a 50-inch projection monitor for some of the better recent coin-ops will cost you around £2,000.

Up to £3,000

Very occasionally, old coin-ops are sold at this sort of price. The Holy Grail of second-hand arcade machines is Taito's original, Japanese-made, blue-cabinet *Space Invaders* – in mint condition these can go for £2,500+, putting them well out of the price range of anyone but the most dedicated and deep-pocketed of collectors. The PCB for something like *Virtual Fighter 2* will come in around £3,000 too.

Up to £20,000

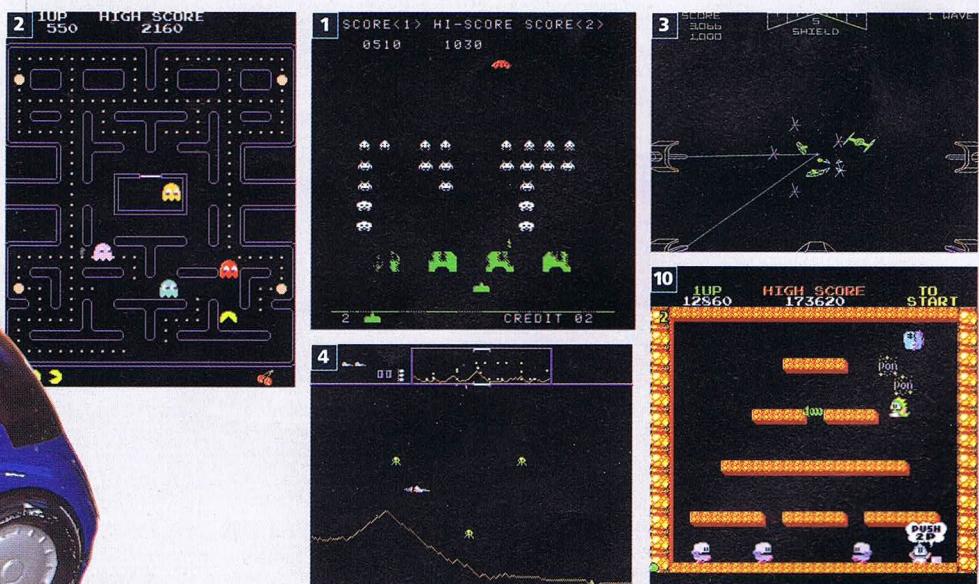
This is the sort of price range you'll be looking at for the best brand new games in hydraulic cabinets. In other words, you probably can't afford it!

Some specific examples

■ What you pay will depend not only on the popularity of the game itself, but also on what exactly you buy – the complete original coin-op, the PCB in a JAMMA cabinet, or the PCB on its own. Here are some suggested prices for 10 popular machines, to get you into the correct ballpark. Remember, though, there are no hard and fast rules for these things, so be prepared to negotiate...

	1 Space Invaders*	2 Pac-Man*	3 Star Wars*	4 Defender*	5 Vulcan Venture	6 Salamander	7 R-Type	8 Rastan Saga	9 Gryzor	10 Bubble Bobble	Complete original game	PCB wired to JAMMA	PCB only
1	£1,500	£300	£200	£1,300	£300	£100	£100	£100	N/A	£200+	£200	£200	
2	£1,000	£300	N/A	£1,300	£100	£100	N/A	£60	N/A	£100+	£200	£200	
3	£200	£60	N/A	£150	£100	£100	N/A	£100	N/A	£100+	£100	£100	
4	£150	£100	N/A	£100	£100	£100	N/A	£60	N/A	£100+	£100	£100	
5	£100	£100	N/A	£100	£70	£70	N/A	£70	N/A	£100+	£100	£100	
6	£100	£100	N/A	£100	£100	£100	N/A	£100	N/A	£100+	£100	£100	
7	£100	£100	N/A	£100	£100	£100	N/A	£100	N/A	£100+	£100	£100	
8	£100	£100	N/A	£100	£100	£100	N/A	£100	N/A	£100+	£100	£100	
9	£100	£70	N/A	£100	£70	£70	N/A	£70	N/A	£100+	£100	£100	
10	£200	£150	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100+	£100	£100	

The games marked * are much sought after and very collectable, making them hard to get hold of and ensuring that you'll probably be paying a premium price. We've seen *Star Wars* at up to £700 for the PCB alone (particularly if hardcore *Star Wars* collectors have got in on the act), though we feel you can get it for as low as the price we've quoted if you're prepared to shop around and haggle.





■ With no warranty likely, it's wise to check out the machine before you buy it.

1. Check for screen burn

This is what you call it when often-repeated words (things like "Game Over" or "1 Coin") are visible on the screen throughout the game. It's clearly bad news.

2. Check it doesn't crash

Turn the whole thing on and off a few times and then leave it on for at least 20 minutes to check it doesn't crash or lock up. If it does, then either the power

supply needs turning up a bit – which your dealer should be able to sort out easily enough – or the board is knackered. If it's the latter, walk away.

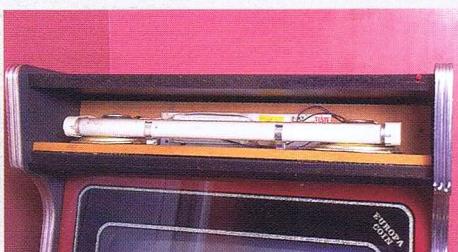
Of course, things can be trickier if you're buying a game's printed circuit board (PCB) on its own. It might be harder to arrange, but make sure you get to see the thing working. If it doesn't, the best advice is again to walk away – most of the time you'll find a busted board just isn't worth the effort of trying to fix.

Before you start to lift the machine, make sure that everything inside is secured. If the monitor, power supply and everything in between are not firmly secured, the likelihood is that something will be destroyed in transit.

5. Make sure the game boards you're buying are originals

In most cases you'll find a copied board will have no manufacturer name, and will look very bland – just plain old rows of EPROMs (or chips). Original games, on the other hand, will usually have the game name printed on the board, or, in Konami's case, a GX number (GX330 is *Hyper Olympics*, for example). Many of the biggest coin-op manufacturers have their own special marks to look out for. All IREM games, for instance, have a hologram.

While you're at it, try to get hold of the game manuals. Not only are these nice to have, they'll help you with some of the game's features. Most coin-ops have dip switches that enable you to set things like the difficulty, lives and time allowed – *Mortal Kombat* even enables you to set the violence and blood levels. If these are missing, most game manuals and settings are available on the Internet at <http://www.spies.com/arcade>, but it's worth checking before you buy.



3. Make sure it all works

The only guaranteed way to do this, of course, is to play the game for a while. Check all the buttons, check the joysticks, check that both Player One and Player Two modes work. On older coin-ops, things like the marquees (the lit signs on the cabinet, identifying the game) will be very hard to get your hands on, so if they're missing make sure you're happy about it.

What to look for

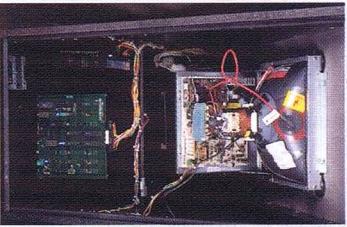
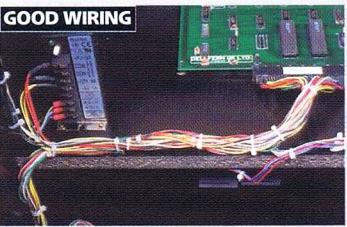
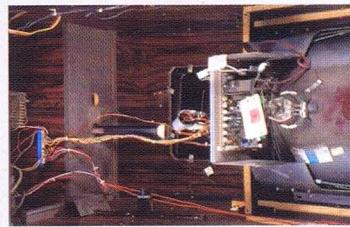
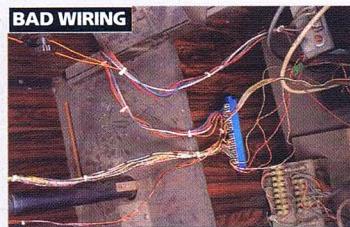
Arcade's top 10 pointers to buying your own arcade machine...

4. Beware of the scale

For an arcade machine to stand up in the back of a van you need up to seven feet of clearance – in a normal Transit van or estate car you'll have to lie it flat, if it'll fit at all. They're heavy, too. It will take two people to shift your coin-op if it's got a 20-inch monitor; any bigger than this and you'll need three people. The bases are weighted to stop them toppling over, so it's a bit like trying to move an overgrown washing machine. Make sure you can get the cabinet up your stairs and through the door – and that it will fit in your bedsit and still give you room to move around.

Make sure whoever you share your house or flat with is happy about having this beeping monstrosity there too – fail to check, and you won't be the first person to find your baby refused houseroom.

Before you start to lift the machine, make sure that everything inside is secured. If the monitor, power supply and everything in between are not firmly secured, the likelihood is that something will be destroyed in transit.



6. Check the wiring

Open up the back of the cabinet and take a look at the wiring loom. This should be fixed securely and neatly to one side of the cabinet, and cabled (in other words, the loom – which will consist

of about 30-40 wires – should be tied tight together to look like one thick cable). If it isn't, and the wires are all over the place, it could well be that some idiot has done a rewire job and the whole deal is buggered. Although this might

seem unimportant when the machine's clearly up and working okay, it's a good indication of how well the beast has been looked after in the past. If the wiring is botched, then it's likely the whole machine has problems – or will develop them.

7. Look out for cigarette burns

Burns on your cabinet are sometimes unavoidable, of course, but you can always ask your dealer if you can swap it for something in better nick – you want to make sure it will hold its re-sale value, after all. If you simply must have the game, and the burns affect the buttons or the joystick, then try to source new ones. If the burns are on the side of the cabinet and nowhere near the controls, you can repaint. While you're at it, check out the base. Cabinets will often have been stored outside, so water damage is a recurring problem.



8. Check the coin mechanism

Coin mechanisms on arcade machines are surprisingly pricey affairs – they cost up to £50 for a new one – so you'll often find that a broken mechanism has been replaced with a old one cannibalised from some knackered old machine. If you have an original game and cabinet, then the old 10p coin slot is the one you want (with, of course, a decent supply of old-style 10ps). If getting hold of the old coins is a pain, aim for a newer mechanism instead. Whatever it is you have, test the mechanism with the correct coins at least two or three times.

If you intend to buy one cabinet and multiple printed circuit boards, so you can swap games around when you get bored of one of them, make sure the cabinet is wired to the Japanese JAMMA standard (see the main text for more details). If it isn't, you probably won't be able to do swapsies. All JAMMA cabinets are fitted with the same connector, meaning you can swap boards from one cabinet to another by simply plugging and unplugging them. When you buy your JAMMA cabinet, make sure you're shown how to rotate the screen so you can play both vertical and left-right scrollers. Most modern cabinets need you to undo between two and four bolts to turn the monitor; if you have to start connecting and disconnecting wires to turn it, don't bother. Happily, there's also a good chance you can rotate the screen just by flicking some of the dip switches in the back; the dealer should be able to tell you about this.

10. Make sure you know exactly what you're buying

If you want an original, dedicated *Pac-Man* machine, make sure that's exactly what you get. Chances are, what you're looking at is some generic cabinet fitted

with a *Pac-Man* game and converted wiring. Get the dealer to write a note to the effect that the cabinet and board are original, if that's what you really want. Remember, as with just about everything, you're generally going to have to pay a little more for the real thing – but it's worth it.

ACharts

What you lot are out buying, and our semi-informed analysis of why.

Official All-Formats Top 40



ChartTrack



1 (-) Spyro the Dragon PSX, SCEA

The first truly enjoyable 3D platformer for the PlayStation crashes straight into the top slot, demonstrating that many PSX owners have always secretly envied Nintendo's cutsey character games.

(4) TOCA Touring Car Championship PSX/PC, Codemasters (budget)

The imminent release of racer TOCA 2 is getting most PlayStation owners all excited, helping the fine prequel leap back to number two a year after its release.

(-) Tenchu: Stealth Assassins PSX, Activision

This engrossing ancient Japan-orientated Tomb Raider clone is only a few sales behind TOCA, and rising all the time.

4 (32) Grand Theft Auto PSX/PC, Take 2 (budget)

An almost illegal climb of 24 places for the baddest cop-shooting, car-smashing mutha in town, thanks to a re-release at friendly Platinum price, £19.99.

5 (-) Formula 1 '98 PSX, Psygnosis

An impressive performance from this disappointing installment in the three-year-old F1 series. We're laying bets on how far it will slip next month.

6 (17) Crash Bandicoot PSX, SCEA (budget)

The manic marsupial's entertaining debut adventure bounces back up the charts. He's got Mr Platinum, and the fervour surrounding the second sequel, to thank.

7 (2) Tekken 3 PSX, Namco

Great though it is, the ultimate fighting game shot its wad in its first week on sale.

8 (10) Premier Manager '98 PSX/PC, Gremlin Interactive

With Champ Manager 3 on the way, this decent footy sim is liable to lose its grip on the top ten very shortly.

9 (15) World Cup '98 PSX/PC/N64, EA Sports

The official "cock-on-the-box" kickabout claws its way back into the top ten.

10 (-) Small Soldiers PSX/GB, EA

Terrible game, but the kids are rushing out to buy it on the "strength" of the film.

11 (13) V-Rally PSX, Infogrames (budget)

With Colin McRae inexplicably dropping like a (pretty heavy) stone, this decent racer is now the UK's top-selling rallying title.

12 (3) Colin McRae Rally PSX/PC, Codemasters

Gasp! One of the best racers ever takes a dramatic nose-dive out of the top ten.

13 (12) Tomb Raider PSX, Eidos (budget)

Hello, Lara. Your first adventures are still out-selling the sequel. Goodbye, Lara.

14 (6) 1080° Snowboarding N64, Nintendo

Nintendo delayed this excellent racer, on the basis that it'd sell more at Christmas!

15 (19) WWF: Warzone PSX/N64, Acclaim

Sweaty, middle-aged men, grabbing each other by the lycra crotch, and somehow creeping up the charts in the process.

16 (14) Tomb Raider II PSX/PC, Eidos Interactive

Oh, hello again, Lara. We reckon that your third set of adventures will be at number one next month.

17 (-) Croc PSX/PC, EA (budget)

Sub-standard platforming adventure, smashing its way back into the charts with a Platinum re-release.

18 (1) F1 World Grand Prix N64, Nintendo

Well, that's a bit of a shocker. A fall of 18 places from number one for this fine F1 sim.

19 (27) Die Hard Trilogy PSX/PC, EA (budget)

It stars Bruce Willis, it's really rather good, and it's climbing up the chart.

20 (-) Resident Evil PSX/PC, Virgin (budget)

Re-released on Platinum, the ultimate videogame horror gets a respectable chart placing, but most people already own it.

21 (29) Banjo-Kazooie N64, Nintendo

22 (25) Rayman
PSX/PC, Ubisoft (budget)

23 (30) FIA Formula 1 PSX/PC, Psygnosis (budget)

24 (-) F-Zero X
N64, Nintendo

25 (7) Gran Turismo PSX, SCEE

26 (9) Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee PSX/PC, GT (budget)

27 (36) Spice World PSX, SCEE (budget)

28 (23) Tekken 2 PSX, SCEE (budget)

29 (-) Super Mario 64 N64, Nintendo

30 (-) Hercules PSX/PC, SCEE (budget)

31 (-) Grim Fandango PC, LucasArts

32 (-) Carmageddon II: Carpocalypse Now PC, Sci

33 (22) Theme Hospital PC/PSX, EA

34 (-) Game Boy Gallery GB, Nintendo

35 (-) Combat Flight Simulator PC, Microsoft

36 (-) Crash Bandicoot 2 PSX, SCEE

37 (5) ISS '98 PSX/N64, Konami

38 (24) Resident Evil 2 PSX, Virgin

39 (-) Heart of Darkness PSX/PC, Infogrames

40 (-) Duke Nukem: Time to Kill PSX, GT

CHARTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH CHART TRACK & ELSA

PlayStation Top 10

1 (-) Spyro the Dragon	SCEE
2 (2) TOCA Touring Car Championship	Platinum
3 (-) Tenchu: Stealth Assassins	Activision
4 (-) Formula 1 '98	Psygnosis
5 (10) Crash Bandicoot	Platinum
6 (1) Tekken 3	Namco
7 (-) Grand Theft Auto	Platinum
8 (-) Small Soldiers	EA
9 (9) V-Rally	Platinum
10 (-) Premier Manager '98	Gremlin Interactive (re-entry)
<i>My Little Pony scampers to the top, while F1 '98's negative reviews secure it low sales.</i>	

PC Top 10

1 (-) Grim Fandango	LucasArts
2 (-) Carmageddon II: Carpocalypse Now	Sci
3 (-) Combat Flight Simulator	Microsoft
4 (-) SiN	Activision
5 (-) FA Premier League Football '99	EA Sports
6 (-) Railroad Tycoon II	Take 2
7 (10) Age of Empires: Rise of Rome	Microsoft
8 (8) Titanic: Adventure Out of Time	Europress
9 (9) World Cup '98	EA Sports
10 (2) Colin McRae Rally	Codemasters
<i>Grim Fandango's sitting pretty.</i>	

N64 Top 10

1 (2) 1080° Snowboarding	Nintendo
2 (1) F1 World Grand Prix	Nintendo
3 (4) Banjo-Kazooie	Nintendo
4 (NE) F-Zero X	Nintendo
5 (10) Super Mario 64	Nintendo
6 (7) GoldenEye 007	Nintendo
7 (3) Mission: Impossible	Infogrames
8 (NE) Body Harvest	Gremlin
9 (RE) World Cup '98	EA Sports
10 (9) Mario Kart 64	Nintendo
<i>1080°'s swept past F1 to occupy the top slot. It's disappointing to see F-Zero X coming in so low.</i>	

Import zone | With NextGen (0181 339 0666)



There's a familiar knock on the door of Arcade Chart Central – it can only be Steve Lucas of NextGen, here to tell us what's happening on the import scene this month. "Everyone wants a Dreamcast! They all want Virtua Fighter for it, too, and most of my customers are disappointed that Sega Rally 2's been delayed." No surprises

there. What import PlayStation games are you flogging? "Well, Xenogears and Rival Schools are doing well this month." And the N64? "Twisted Edge Snowboarding and Knife Edge are big, but everybody wants Zelda." We'd wager the Neo Geo Pocket handheld is selling in numbers, too. "Yep." And your biggest seller is probably Marvel vs Street Fighter on the Saturn? "Er, yes, actually."

DECKED



The Legaia: No 1 in Japan.

Japanese All-Format Top 10

1 (-) The Legaia	PSX, SCEI
2 (-) Dokapon! Ikari No Tekken	PSX, Asmik Ace
3 (3) Pocket Monster Pikachu	GB, Nintendo
4 (1) Beat Mania	PSX, Konami
5 (-) FIFA World Cup '98	PSX, EA Sports/Square
6 (-) Vampire Savior Ex Edition	PSX, Capcom
7 (-) Wario Land 2	GB, Nintendo
8 (-) Simple 1500 Series Vol. 1	PSX, Culture
9 (4) Metal Gear Solid	PSX, Konami
10 (-) Zeus Carnage Heart Second	PSX, Artlink

US Console Top 5

1 (-) Metal Gear Solid	PSX, Konami
2 (-) WCW/NOW Revenge	N64, THQ
3 (10) Tenchu	PSX, Activision
4 (-) Pokemon Red	GB, Nintendo
5 (5) NFL Blitz	PSX, Midway

US PC Top 5

1 (2) Deer Hunter II 3D	GT
2 (-) Links LS Golf 1999 Upgrade	Access
3 (-) Diablo	Cendant
4 (-) Rugrats Adventure Game	Learning Company
5 (-) Play With The Teletubbies	Cendant

US charts supplied by PC-Data

Chart Analysis | Introducing Captain Fish

Hello, fish fans, Captain Fish here. I don't like to be the bearer of bad tidings, but there's little good news for fish lovers this month. My fish graph demonstrates that there's a distinct lack of fish in the charts, apart from that big bugger in *Mario 64* and an unconfirmed sighting of a cod in *Metal Gear Solid*. Sadly, Activision's "Tench-u" arrives at number 3 with nary a whimper from our bottom-of-the-seabed-dwelling friends.



Fish is off.

Games not starring fish

40

Games starring fish

0

Don't believe the hype

Arcade's top ten games that could, should have tried that little bit harder.

The history of videogaming is littered with much-hyped new titles that have failed to deliver. All of them were chattered about in excited voices before they appeared, then dissed in angry, betrayed tones the minute we actually played them. Really, they're best forgotten. Sorry.

1. The Rise of the Robots

All formats, Acclaim

Videogaming's most famous flop. Acclaim promised a fighting game with rendered characters, hundreds of frames of animation and *Street Fighter*-beating gameplay. What was delivered, however, could be completed by holding the joystick diagonally upright for the entire game.

2. The Great Space Race

Spectrum, Legend

This intergalactic epic was ruined by the programmers, who forgot to make it interactive. And the Movisoft2 system, which had promised "quality film-like graphics", but delivered a series of characters who could only vibrate their mouths, and spaceships that would have been rejected from *Space Invaders* as "primitive".

3. Pac-Man

Atari, Atari 2600

Atari commissioned a single programmer to knock this out in a couple of months. It featured one lonely ghost; the famous power-pills were transformed into anorexic carrots; and Pac-Man looked like a burnt crisp.

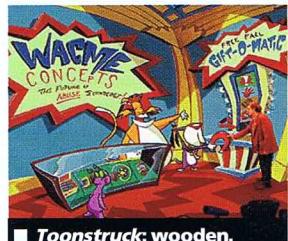
4. The Race Against Time

8-bit machines, Codemasters

When the Darling brothers saw



Frontiers: First Encounters: Elite's co-author accused Braben of nicking all his ideas. Oh dear.



Toonstruck: wooden.



Myst: should have dived.

spaceship superimposed on top. Prospective CD32 and Mega-CD owners weren't impressed. Both machines disappeared soon after.

7. E.T.

Atari, Atari 2600

After spending \$25 million buying the rights, Atari wasn't going to waste any more money. So what should have been an atmospheric action/adventure featuring the eponymous alien instead starred the deformed half-brother of E.T., wandering around Lego-town getting stuck in holes.

8. Frontiers: First Encounters

Amiga/PC, Gametek

David Braben, co-creator of the classic BBC space-trading game *Elite*, and its early '90s sequel *Frontiers*, must have thought he'd lucked across a license to print money by the time he came up with this third installment. Most gamers gave up after the 32nd patch disk had been released in an attempt to fix the bugs.

9. Ultima Online

Internet, Origin

The launch of this Internet only game was followed by a huge on-line protest. With Origin now having to deal with a lawsuit from irate *Ultima* fans, main man Richard Garriott is probably wishing he hadn't bothered.

10. Myst

PC, Brøderbund

Not a flop at all, but it should have been. The agonisingly slow unfolding of the story, the ridiculous puzzles and lack of gameplay were bad enough, but what made it worse is that *Myst* went on to be the biggest-selling game in the world ever, mainly because of its pweety pictures.

Top ten ready-to-use excuses for doing really badly at games

- "The controller's broken!"
- "I needed the toilet."
- "Sorry, I momentarily fell asleep there."
- "Had we started?"
- "Which buttons is it?"
- "This game's crap."
- "Who am I?"
- "I don't usually play games."
- "You were distracting me."
- "My hands hurt."

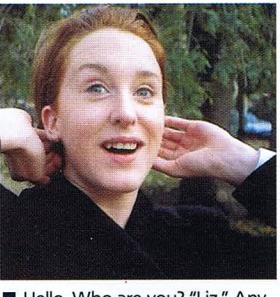
Vox-pop | But what do the people really want for Christmas?



"Hello, I'm Vicky." Been shopping? "Yes." Christmas presents? "Yes." For who? "Me." [Bag's full of clothes.] What's this? [Looks embarrassed.] "Nothing." [Waves frilly underwear in air.] Got a PlayStation? "I like Spyro. He's cute." Okay, thanks, bye.



Morning. Name? "Ben." Do anything interesting? "I'm in a band." Cool. What d'you want for Christmas? "Tekken 3. I love beat-'em-ups." Fantastic, isn't it? Have you played *Rival Schools*? You get to beat up the teachers. "No." Oh. Anyway, cheers.



Hello. Who are you? "Liz." Any good at games? "I'm alright at *Colin McRae*, and I quite like *Abe's Oddysee*." Designed by a lass, you know. Christmas? "Not sure." How about *Abe's Exoddus*? "Is *Zelda* out yet?" Should be. "I'll get that." Alright, have a good one.

Release Schedule

Eager to buy a new game? This is how we think the next five months will pan out.

December

4th	Asteroids	Activision	PSX
4th	B-Movie	GT	PSX
4th	Brian Lara Cricket	Codemasters	PSX
4th	Dodgem Arena	Black Friar	PSX
4th	NFL Blitz	Midway	PSX
4th	Brunswick Bowling	EA	PSX
4th	Heretic 2	Activision	PC
4th	Powerslide	GT	PC
4th	Pro Pilot '99	Cendant	PC
4th	Saga	Cryo	PC
4th	S.C.A.R.S.	Ubisoft	PC
4th	Star Wars: Rogue Squadron	LucasArts	PC
4th	Thief: The Dark Project	EIDOS	PC
4th	UEFA Championship Manager	Infogrames	PC
4th	War of the Worlds	GT	PC
4th	Wild Metal Country	Gremlin	PC
4th	Asteroids	Activision	PC
4th	Buck Bumble	Ubisoft	N64
4th	NBA Jam '99	Acclaim	N64
4th	NFL Blitz	Midway	N64
4th	NHL '99	Acclaim	N64
4th	NHL Breakaway '99	Acclaim	N64
4th	S.C.A.R.S.	Ubisoft	N64
4th	Starshot	Infogrames	N64
4th	Turok 2	Acclaim	N64
4th	Twisted Edge Snowboarding	Midway	N64
4th	Virtual Pool	Crave	N64
4th	Turok 2	Acclaim	CGB

Grand Prix 500

TBA	Magic & Mayhem
TBA	Savage Arena
TBA	Soulbringer
TBA	Top Gun: Hornets' Nest
TBA	Tribal Lore
TBA	Turok 2
TBA	Blade
TBA	NBA Jam '99
TBA	South Park

Funsoft

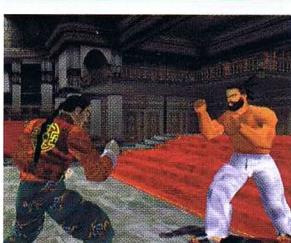
Virgin	PC
Rage	PC
Gremlin	PC
MicroProse	PC
Gremlin	PC
Acclaim	PC
Gremlin	PC
Acclaim	CGB
Acclaim	CGB

February

5th	Bug's Life	SCEE	PSX
5th	Delta Force	Novalogic	PC
5th	Starcraft Battle Chest	Cendant	PC
12th	WCW Thunder	THQ	PSX
19th	Lion King 2	Disney	PC
TBA	Akuji the Heartless	EIDOS	PSX
TBA	Earthworm Jim 3D	Interplay	PSX
TBA	Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver	EIDOS	PSX
TBA	Metal Gear Solid	Konami	PSX
TBA	Monaco Grand Prix Racing Sim	Ubisoft	PSX
TBA	No Fear Downhill Mt Biking	Codemasters	PSX
TBA	Prince Naseem	Codemasters	PSX
TBA	Running Wild	SCEE	PSX
TBA	Space Invaders	Activision	PSX
TBA	The Gran Stream Saga	SCEE	PSX
TBA	Tribal	SCEE	PSX
TBA	Viva Football	Virgin	PSX
TBA	Alien vs Predator	EA/Fox	PC
TBA	Alpha Centauri	EA	PC
TBA	Baja 1000 Racing	Brøderbund	PC
TBA	Championship Manager 3	EIDOS	PC
TBA	Civilization: Call To Power	Activision	PC
TBA	Command & Conquer II	EA	PC
TBA	Diablo 2	Cendant	PC
TBA	Duke Nukem Forever	GT	PC
TBA	Dungeon Keeper II	EA	PC
TBA	Extreme Warfare	Brøderbund	PC
TBA	Lands of Lore III	Westwood	PC
TBA	Machines	Acclaim	PC
TBA	Messiah	Interplay	PC
TBA	No Fear Downhill Mt Biking	Codemasters	PC
TBA	Outcast	Infogrames	PC
TBA	Prax Wars	EA	PC
TBA	Prince Naseem	Codemasters	PC
TBA	South Park	Acclaim	PC
TBA	Star Trek: First Contact	MicroProse	PC
TBA	Star Wars: Force Commander	LucasArts	PC
TBA	Star Wars: X-wing Alliance	LucasArts	PC
TBA	Starship Troopers	MicroProse	PC
TBA	The Guardian	Cryo	PC
TBA	Total Annihilation: Kingdoms	GT	PC
TBA	Ultima Ascension	EA	PC
TBA	Unreal Level Editor	GT	PC
TBA	Uprising 2: Lead & Destroy	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Warzone 2100	EIDOS	PC
TBA	WCW Nitro	THQ	PC
TBA	Earthworm Jim 3D	Interplay	N64
TBA	Gex 64	GT	N64
TBA	Micro Machines 64	Codemasters	N64
TBA	Monaco Grand Prix Racing Sim	Ubisoft	N64
TBA	South Park	Acclaim	N64
TBA	Asterix	Infogrames	CGB

HMV

Most wanted | Write and let us know what you're looking forward to playing...



Virtua Fighter 3 Tournament Battle

Sega, Dreamcast
■ The original 3D fighter, dragged into the modern age. Smooth moves and Tekken-beating graphics are likely to show off the Dreamcast's potential and, if it's anything like the originals, it should play like your best dreams.



R4: Ridge Racer Type 4

Namco, PlayStation
■ The dazzling beacon of the PlayStation's early '99 line-up, this updated and improved version of 1994's original should prove a joy to behold. With 300 car variations and eight tracks of hi-res loveliness, could this beat Gran Turismo? We'll see.



Perfect Dark

Rare, N64
■ It's months away, but the sequel to GoldenEye 007 should be Rare's most accomplished masterpiece yet. Plenty of gun-firing, coupled with the stealth that made 007 such a classy experience, could make this the Next Big Thing in first-person shooters. We can't wait.

5th	Rollage	Psygnosis	PSX
12th	Half-Life Team Fortress	Cendant	PC
12th	Starsiege Tribes	Cendant	PC
19th	Duke Nukem: Zero Hour	GT	N64
TBA	Alien Resurrection	EA/Fox	PSX
TBA	Driver	TBA	PSX
TBA	Indy Jones / Infernal Machine	LucasArts	PSX
TBA	Quake II	Activision	PSX
TBA	Rainbow Six	Take 2	PSX
TBA	R4 : Ridge Racer Type 4	Namco	PSX
TBA	Rayman 2	Ubisoft	PSX
TBA	Beneath	Activision	PC
TBA	Close Combat 3	Microsoft	PC
TBA	Flyers	Take 2	PC
TBA	Heroes of Might & Magic III	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Indy Jones / Infernal Machine	LucasArts	PC
TBA	Interstate '82	Activision	PC
TBA	MechWarrior 3	MicroProse	PC
TBA	Prey	GT	PC
TBA	Prince of Persia 3D	Brøderbund	PC
TBA	Rayman 2	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Reel Feel Golf	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Slave Zero	Accolade	PC
TBA	Solar	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Star Trek: Birth of the Federation	MicroProse	PC
TBA	Third World	Activision	PC
TBA	Ultima Online: Second Age	Origin	PC
TBA	FIFA 99	EA	N64
TBA	Quake II	Activision	N64
TBA	Rayman 2	Ubisoft	N64
TBA	Three Lions	Take 2	CGB

April

23rd	Gabriel Knight Anthology	Cendant	PC
TBA	360	Cryo	PSX
TBA	Joe Blow	Telstar	PSX
TBA	X-Men	Activision	PSX
TBA	Black Moon Chronicles	Cryo	PC
TBA	D Jump	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Descent III	Interplay	PC
TBA	Giants	Interplay	PC
TBA	Joe Blow	Telstar	PC
TBA	Kanaan	Ubisoft	PC
TBA	Max Payne	Take 2	PC
TBA	360	Cryo	PC
TBA	360	Cryo	N64



■ Prey: First-person shooting. A novel idea.



■ X-Men: Tekken for folk who fancy mutants.



■ Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine: A movie licensed game that's just ten years too late.

Q&A

Write to us

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Heard a rumour? Missing a game of yesteryear? We torture Mark Green until he sings with the details.



■ Mario Party:
It's probably
going to be a
little bit odd.

Q I read somewhere that the new *Mario* game is almost ready for release in Japan. Is this true? What's going on?

L Barr, Cheltenham

A Well, you might be getting mixed up with the new Nintendo fighting game starring Mario and friends – see Game On (page 12 of this issue) for more details. But it's more likely that what you've seen is the forthcoming N64 title, *Mario Party*. This Hudson-developed game is a video boardgame for up to four players, featuring all the characters you're familiar with from *Mario Kart*, and its due out in Japan in a month or two's time.

Play involves jumping on to the board's tiles, and then taking part in one of 50 different mini-games, ranging from bowling and bobsleigh racing, through to something called "Mario Orchestra". Unfortunately, there are no plans as yet to bring it to Europe.

Q Are there going to be any more *Oddworld* games, starring Abe?

J Gilbertson, Liverpool

A Oddworld Inhabitants, the team behind *Oddysee* and *Exodus*, has ambitious plans for the *Oddworld* series of games. The

original idea – before the first game had even been released – was for a saga of five *Oddworld* games, each starring a different character. The whole series will apparently span around ten years – *Inhabitants* is effectively waiting for game hardware technology to catch up with the team's more ambitious ideas.

So why, then, are there two Abe games? Well, because the first instalment, the rather gorgeous 2D platformer *Abe's Oddysee*, garnered such positive reactions that the team decided to develop what it's calling a "bonus game", *Abe's Exodus*, as well as the five core games. Meanwhile, the second part of the series proper, *Munch's Oddysee*, is due for a release on either the Dreamcast or PlayStation 2, and will star a different character. There's even been the suggestion that there'll be one big final part to the series, encompassing all of the characters from the quintuplet, including a creature called Meech, who is destined to star in the third *Oddworld* game.

Abe fans needn't fret about these apparently dramatic changes to the nature of the *Oddworld* series, though. According to publisher GT Interactive, each successive instalment will feature familiar faces from previous games, so Abe and his subservient Mudokon friends will crop up somewhere in all five parts of the series proper, as well as in any other "bonus games" that appear.

Whatever happened to...? | Superstars of gaming's past tracked down

Jon Ritman

■ Claim to fame: Jon Ritman was the programmer behind a host of brilliant isometric 3D games released for the old 8-bit computers. *Head Over Heels* is widely acclaimed as the very best of this 3D genre, and his two *Match Day* games were quite possibly the finest kickabouts of the '80s.

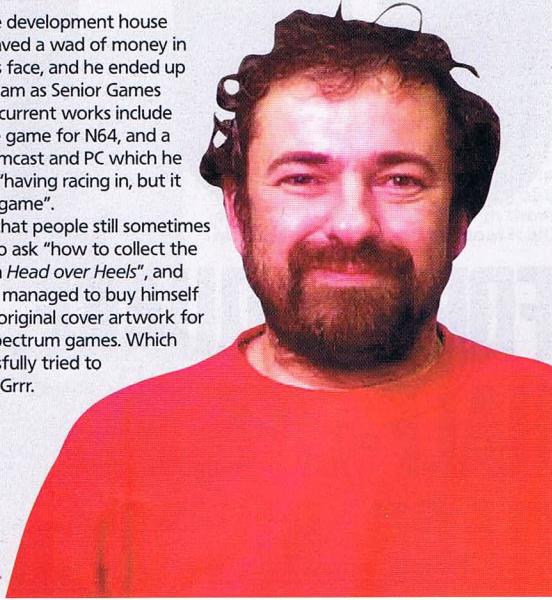
Then, to the upset of 8-bit owners worldwide, he suddenly announced he was quitting the computing scene to work alongside Rare on its new arcade system. And then, just as mysteriously as he'd arrived, he disappeared...

■ So, where is he? Still programming games, and surprisingly easy to get in touch with. After the Rare experience fell through, he put together his own development team Cranberry Source, that got the next instalment in the *Match Day* series, *Super Match Soccer*, ready for release on the PC.

But then, all of a sudden, plans

changed. The development house Argonaut waved a wad of money in front of Jon's face, and he ended up joining the team as Senior Games Designer. His current works include an adventure game for N64, and a title for Dreamcast and PC which he describes as, "having racing in, but it isn't a racing game".

Jon says that people still sometimes ring him up to ask "how to collect the last crown on *Head over Heels*", and that he's just managed to buy himself some of the original cover artwork for several old Spectrum games. Which we unsuccessfully tried to blag off him. Grr.



SHOOTING STAR



STORY BY JONATHAN SMITH

**FORGET QUAKE. MOVE OVER, UNREAL. WITH
HALF-LIFE, THE 3D SHOOT-'EM-UP ARMS
RACE JUST WENT THERMONUCLEAR...**

You turn up for your ordinary job, on an ordinary day. Don your ordinary lab coat and begin a very ordinary experiment. With some very extraordinary consequences. A simple rip in space-time, and your quiet research base has suddenly become the centre of horrific alien activity. Clearly, you'll have to fight hard to survive. As *Half-Life*'s unlikely hero, research assistant Gordon Freeman, it's up to you to think your way through complex and lethal traps, battle sophisticated alien foes, then take on the might of the military. Everyone wants you. Dead.

The man behind *Half-Life* makes creation of the game sound so simple. Like the casual hero passer-by who dives into the flaming building, emerges ten minutes later clutching two kids and a puppy, then claims afterwards that his actions were "nothing". Like Superman, just doing his job. Pure instinct. Simple.

"There was a point last year where we had the option of pushing something out the door that had a lot of cool technology but wasn't what we'd set out to ship," smiles Gabe Newell, the co-founder and Managing Director of Valve Software.

"We sat around and argued quite a bit about what we should do, since we were about to go spectacularly and publicly late, and decided there was nothing we could do about it unless we started cutting our ambition levels drastically. Then someone said something like, 'Look, why are we here? Surely it's to build games we can be proud of?' And that settled it. Going late was going to embarrass us and make Sierra crazy, but not nearly as much as shipping something that was not as good as it could be."

"It's a simplistic way of thinking about the problem," he concludes, kind of casually, "but sometimes you have to make things simple."

And in that moment of visionary clarity, where so many others would have knuckled under to compromise, an extraordinary decision was taken. *Half-Life*, Valve's first ever game, would *not* be rushed out of the studio to please its publishers - or, indeed, anyone except its tightly-knit team of freakishly talented developers. Instead, it would be polished with exquisite care, then polished once again, until it was, quite simply, one of the finest games ever created.

"Being a year late and slipping as many times as we did was hard on us, hard on Sierra, hard on the retailers, and really hard on the fans," says Newell, with few traces of regret. After all, it's not like he had any choice. He knew his team was capable of producing something not

***Half-Life*, Valve's first ever game, would *not* be rushed out of the studio to please its publishers - or, indeed, anyone except its tightly-knit team of freakishly talented developers**

just "all right"; not merely "good". Instead *Half-Life* would become something extraordinary. He *had* to let them run with it.

"I can't count the number of times I went into the office, saw a crowd of people huddled around someone's computer, and then walked over to see something that blew my mind," recalls the ex-Microsoft manager. So he trusted his instincts, trusted his team, and then, in the biggest step of all, underwrote the delay from his own pocket.

It was a simple act of faith. Thank goodness he took it.

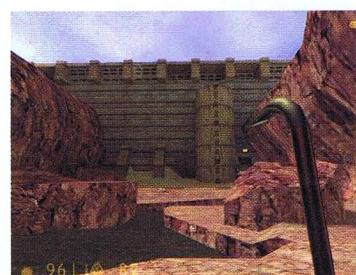
I don't think it's overstating things to call *Half-Life* a Woodstock for the forthcoming generation of computer games - a noisy, joyous, phenomenally exciting game-as-event. A game to make everything that has gone before seem grey and stifled. Make no mistake: *Half-Life* will exceed your expectations at every turn. It shows just what the future is capable of. And it's Valve's *first game*, for God's sake. Heaven only knows what the team will come up with when it gets up to speed.



■ This might look like some weedy little revolver, but in fact it's a bit of a mean old weapon, with a kick like a mule. And those might look like a bunch of friendly good guys, but they're actually nasty government Black Ops troops, as keen on wiping you out in their attempt to clean up this Science Base Gone Horribly Wrong as they are to get rid of the invading aliens. Enemies are like buses: none for ages, then two come along at once.



■ There's a nasty alien down there, and it wants you dead. This particular beastie is one of the drone-like alien slaves, its weapon a nasty zap of lightning. The crowbar (bottom) might seem like a bit of a nothing weapon - like the axe in Quake - but you'd be surprised. Smashing glass (so you can jump through it), prising open vents so you can crawl through them, hitting folk on the head, it does it all.



SHOOTING STAR

Sid Meier (on *Civilization*) and Dave Perry (on *Wild 9*), as well as leading the development of PlayStation *Doom* and *Doom 64* at Williams. The 3D artists Chuck Jones and Doug Wood came to Valve from 3D Realms, where both were a part of the "first generation" *Prey* team. Illustrator Karen Laur had a hand in Activision's *Zork Nemesis*, among other things. And animator Steve Theodore had already worked on both *MechCommander* and FASA's aborted *MechWarrior III*.

Intriguingly, however, many of *Half-Life*'s designers were plucked from the somewhat less respectable land of Internet fandom. These semi-professional *Quake*-tinkerers and level-creators – including, all the way from England, one Dario Casali – have been responsible for most of *Half-Life*'s level designs, and their expertise and passion shines through in every perfectly-placed trap, every beautifully-orchestrated alien ambush.

They needed a world to play in, these hungry young talents, and so they started out with something that everyone was already accustomed to – the world of *Quake II*. Valve licensed the engine and began to overhaul it, piece by piece, until it started to meet the company's own, much more exacting, specifications. The end result, of course, is a massive improvement on id's original; but by working from an existing technology, the team was able to speed up the development process considerably, and free-up much more time to work on the beloved details. Gabe Newell explains how:

"The nice thing about starting out two years ago with the *Quake* engine is that we always had the game running, even on day one. The artists were able to be productive, and we could start testing out gameplay ideas months before a particular sub-system was replaced. We figured out everything we needed to do to build *Half-Life*, and then set out to replace each piece in an order that let us do minimal re-work on the content. The first major change was the software renderer, while the last pieces we did were all to do with perfecting the multi-player code."

Right from the start, then, *Half-Life*'s technical achievements were matched to a bold conception of the game as a coherent *artistic* creation. Clever

So, exactly who are the wonder-mongers behind Valve's instant classic? And how did they make their debut so inordinately ace?

Much of it has to do with the fact that while the two-year-old team may be new, the individuals who make it up aren't. Deep at its heart are ex-Microsoft employees Gabe Newell and Mike Harrington. Along for the ride are a couple of other Gates-fleeing refugees, plus a selection of smart people from all over the gaming world.

Game designer Harry Teasley, for example, had worked for both

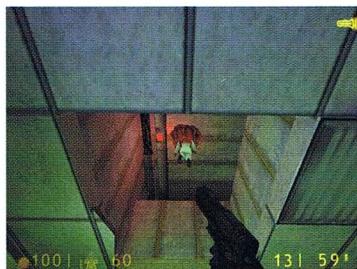


■ Watch out for this guy – he's an alien grunt, armed with a symbiotic parasite weapon (it fires little beasties that follow you round corners, which makes fighting him a right bastard). Watch out for the dead and dying scientists (like these guys to the right) too. By watching what they do – and, more importantly, what kills them – you can often avoid danger yourself.

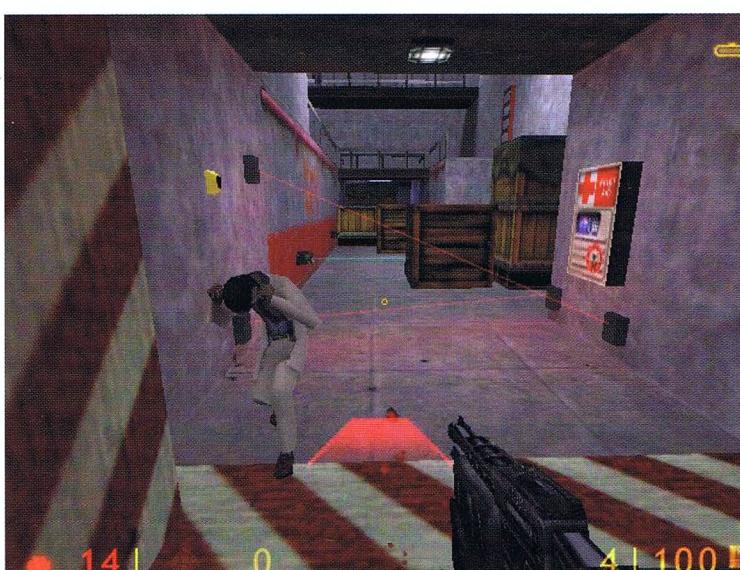


■ *Half-Life* doesn't have end-of-level bosses as such, but this guy is close. He's armed with flame throwers for arms, enough to make him a right handful (hem hem). Whizzing towards him is one of your laser-guided rockets, one of the more satisfying weapons you can get your mitts on.





■ Watch out for the installation guards, like the guy lurking in the shadows to the right. You can control these guys in a limited way, telling them to, say, follow you. Get one to walk in front of you, for instance, and he will trigger any lurking traps, like so much cannon fodder. Neat.



■ Here's a perfect example of the sort of trap you might stumble across in Half-Life. See that thin, knee-level laser beam? It's a trap set by the government troops – step through it, and it'll set off loads of explosives, blowing you to kingdom come. Best to jump it, or let a guard or scientist blunder into it by mistake.



I don't think it's overstating things to call *Half-Life* a Woodstock for the forthcoming generation of computer games – a noisy, joyous, phenomenally exciting game-as-event



new features were developed only if they helped to expand upon the original vision of the game: an utterly immersive and compelling adventure through a plausible, if relentlessly action-packed, world.

"All the decisions were driven by gameplay," confirms Valve's Art Director Ted Backman. "For example, we'd spend a lot of time looking at new monsters and then comparing their abilities with the monsters we were already using, to make sure that they were actually adding something useful to the game and didn't unbalance things."

"For instance, someone did a bunch of work to add visibility calculation to the monsters, so they'd all have different abilities to see distances and to make things out in the dark. But when we play-tested it, the general reaction was just, 'Gee, they're stupid'. Even though we'd added a nice piece of technology, it sucked as something to actually make the gameplay better."

"One of the longest-running arguments we had during the design of *Half-Life*," adds Harry Teasley, "was over the idea of 'realism'. When does it help the game, and when is it an excuse to justify tedious gameplay and boring level design? We pretty much ended up banning the word, and instead focused on immersiveness, interactivity and a phrase that I think Gabe came up with, 'experiential density' – which I suspect meant whatever Gabe wanted it to mean when he wanted to win a design discussion!"

Experiential density: what a sublime concept it is. It's there in the perfect pacing, with every challenge leading seamlessly into the next. It's there in the atmospheric details – the footsteps which echo to reflect the material you're walking on, or the swaying glow of your headlamp as you crawl through a darkened conduit. And it's there, most of all, in the heart attacks that lurk around every corner – the

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alien suddenly leaping at you from the shadows, or the terribly hapless scientist shot to pieces in front of you by a hidden security system.

"We always knew it would be a game that was going to scare people," says Ted Backman. "We really liked the mix of horror and technology – the sense of things spinning out of control."

Much of the credit for *Half-Life*'s sense of dizzying tension must go to the writer/game designer Marc Laidlaw, in his other life a well-established horror novelist. It was his task to co-ordinate *Half-Life*'s narrative, and script all of the many interchanges that you'll have with other characters in the game. The results are remarkable – apart from anything else, *Half-Life* is one of the most *watchable* games in recent memory. You'll find that even non-playing spectators cry out in shock when one of the friendly security guard gets killed in middle of giving you a vital message.

"I've written screenplays as well as novels, and working on *Half-Life* was closer to the former," Laidlaw says, as he attempts to explain his technique. "The biggest problem was also what made attempting it most attractive – the fact that there weren't any good existing examples of how to do it right."

Half-Life's unique zero-cutscenes narrative – all storytelling, even the intro, is enacted seamlessly through the main game engine – thrust the writer right into unknown territory. And because one of the game's greatest assets is its population of intelligent, independently-acting non-player characters, he found himself having to go so far as to plan conversations which would take place off-screen, between characters you wouldn't ever meet.

But when you first overhear two computer-controlled people talking to each other, and lurk carefully behind them so they won't notice you, you'll

"Balancing the weapons more evenly, while giving them a lot of tactical flexibility, is going to really appeal to experienced Quake and Quake II players"



■ Remember that neat parasite – or "Hive Hand" – weapon, as used by the alien grunt on the previous spread? Well, here it is again – except, having killed the critter and hacked off his hand, you've got it now. Those aliens ahead won't be feasting on dead scientist for long.



■ Now this bit really is neat: that there's a shark cage, inside it is a special underwater dart gun, and just out of shot below your feet is a giant water tank, containing a mutant fish monster. Guess what you've got to do? But in doing it, make sure you avoid the alien ceiling barnacle affair at top left: walk under it, and its long tongue affair will grab you, and pull you to your doom. Watch out, too, for the fellas to the left: a normal government trooper after your blood, and an alien sound dog. These hunt in packs, and create deadly sonic booms with those revolting mouth affairs. If you see its head vibrate, leg it, or shoot it quick – it's building up for its deadly alien bark attack.





be delighted that he took the trouble to make the story so involved and involving.

Laidlaw was well aware how much he was demanding of his characters, however – and how easily his carefully-wrought scenes of dramatic intensity could slip into the realms of the ridiculous.

"Part of the problem with working on something that is intended to have an emotional impact," he remarks, "is that you have to keep it from getting campy. Bringing in play-testers and seeing how they reacted was essential to keep reminding us of what the game was about. and helped rein in some of our excesses."

Luckily, this area of the project didn't prove too difficult. "Once we got in a groove, the overall design process went pretty smoothly," says Harry Teasley.

"The biggest changes as the game evolved," adds Ted Backman, picking up on Marc Laidlaw's concern for a consistent dramatic tone. "were to move in a more photo-realistic direction with the textures, and to stay away from a cartoony look for some of the characters."

Anyone who's seen the startlingly lifelike inhabitants of *Half-Life* in action would consider that particular mission well and truly accomplished – thanks in no small part to the all-new "skeletal" animation system developed by Senior Software Development Engineer Ken Birdwell.

"There's a whole laundry list of benefits," he boasts of his bones-based technology. "The creatures' feet don't skid nearly as much. You can use the skeleton to do precise weapon damage calculation. And keyframe animation can be mixed with procedural animation: for example, people's heads turn to look at you, or the soldiers' weapons point in the direction that they are shooting. Also, we can do a much better job of illuminating characters, using things like muzzle flashes in multi-player. And animations are much smaller, allowing us to put huge amounts of animation into the game. Basically, we can do much more complex characters."

"I would be surprised," he finishes, "to see any future 3D games come out that don't implement at least primitive hierarchical or skeletal systems."

The use of skeletal systems is far from being *Half-Life*'s only major technical achievement. The implementation of proper 3D sound, with dynamic processing to add environment-determined effects (such as echoes) in real time, is remarkably effective. Turn around while someone's talking to you, and you'll hear them first in one ear, then gradually more loudly in the other. Swim underwater, and you'll hear muffled noises above.

In addition, the artificial intelligence routines are, by a long way the most accomplished ever devised. They get particular praise in our review (see page 124 this issue), but the bottom line is that they work, and are seen to work. Many other games have claimed to incorporate similar features before now, but *Half-Life*'s – finally – appear convincing, and on a regular basis.

And then there's the small matter of a 32-participant multi-player mode. "The work Yahn Bernier has done to make multi-player a lot easier and more accessible to mere mortals is probably going to be the game's single most important feature," reckons Ken Birdwell, while level designer Dario Casali comments that: "Balancing the weapons more evenly, while giving them a lot of tactical flexibility, is going to really appeal to experienced *Quake* and *Quake II* players."

And there's a uniquely large arsenal on offer, too, including several dual-action weapons, such as the combined machine gun and grenade launcher. ("Secondary fire on the crossbow is the best thing since cheese on toast," laughs Gabe Newell enticingly, as if we needed any further encouragement.)

Indeed, from launching you into the world's best intro, through to a staggering end-of-game showdown, *Half-Life*'s got it all. The only drawback, in fact, is that it's only available for PC, and for a good PC at that, so unless you have over a grand's worth of kit you're not invited to the party.

Even that could change, though, as Valve's Director of Development Mike Harrington reveals. "We tried to make *Half-Life* a good game, and didn't really think about it in terms of it being a PC game as opposed to a console game. Ports to consoles are something we are looking at. We've actually started talking to the console manufacturers, but the discussions are very preliminary."

So one way or another, *Half-Life* is coming to get you. Rejoice.

Jon Smith wrote about Lara Croft in the December issue of Arcade. His hands have nearly stopped shaking.

The best thing in Life

Few games, and even fewer 3D shooters, are packed with certifiably Cool Things like Valve's incredible debut. Here's our top ten – it was very hard to choose.

■ 1. The intro

Many first-time players, so used to the clichés of lesser titles, sit quietly in front of the intro, wait for it to pass. But the great thing about *Half-Life* is that there are no cut-scenes; no dead air-time. Even this opening movie is rendered in the game engine – so take a look around as your train leads you through tunnels to work, and admire the throwaway details which surround you. And think: you could've missed it.



Not many games would dare have an intro sequence depicted using the actual in-game engine, but plucky old *Half-Life* does.

■ 2. Watching soldiers fight aliens

Several times in your *Half-Life* adventure, you'll be able to witness a fierce battle between computer-controlled forces. Intervene if you like, but it's probably more satisfying to sit back, watch the AI fight, then simply mop up afterwards.



■ 3. The tie-straightening man

This impulsive and sinistfully besotted figure crops up at the strangest moments – and always just out of reach. Who is he? What's he playing at?



The dreaded low-key horror of the tie-straightening man. Now that's scary.

■ 4. Immersive storytelling without cutscenes

"Our sense is that this is critical if you want to suck people into the experience," asserts Newell. And, indeed, one day all games will work just like this. You can turn around, walk away or just listen – all the action moves on independently. Genius.



Packed with huge special effects, *Half-Life*'s like *The X-Files* meets *Die Hard*, as directed by Jim Cameron.

■ 5. The helicopter

Without doubt, the single most exciting thing in any game ever. If you've seen it, you'll know what we mean. Brilliant, isn't it? And if you haven't... well, we won't spoil anything for you.



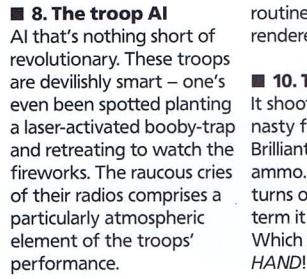
■ 6. The scientists

They get eaten. They get shot to bits. They fall down lift shafts (hilariously). The Valvers refer to them as "Barneys" – and you should keep a close eye on any that you spot. Chances are, they're about to alert you to some trap... which they generally achieve by means

of blundering straight into it. At least you can learn from their mistakes.

■ 7. The cockroaches

Just one of many details – made more delightful for being utterly pointless. Step on 'em and they crunch delightfully. So you could, theoretically, splatter a trail of them to mark your way. If you were sadistic enough.



■ 8. The troop AI

All that's nothing short of revolutionary. These troops are devilishly smart – one's even been spotted planting a laser-activated booby-trap and retreating to watch the fireworks. The raucous cries of their radios comprises a particularly atmospheric element of the troops' performance.

■ 9. The special effects

Brimful with huge bursts of shimmering alien power, the sparkling bolts of electricity, and the bolts of death flung by your experimental weapons, *Half-Life* misses no opportunity to wow with extraordinary graphical effects. They even look pretty good when running on a non 3D-accelerated machine; Valve has done a fantastic job writing the routines into its software renderer. Magnificent.

■ 10. The alien bug gun

It shoots a barrage of tiny, nasty flies round corners. Brilliant! It's got unlimited ammo. Excellent! And it turns out that true Valvers term it the "Hive Hand". Which is even better. HIVE HAND! Urghhh!



Robin

Rich

Andrea

Piste Again

Your host | **Sam Richards**



It happens every couple of weeks: the team get together for a night of furious multi-player gaming while slowly relieving our local off-liscence of its wares. This month we're snowboarding – in the safety of the living room.

PHOTOGRAPHY: ALL SPORT AND GAVIN ROBERTS

Le'ts weigh up the options: to prepare for real winter sports, you must shell out hundreds (maybe thousands) of quid for specialist equipment, not to mention the high-performance breathable Globo-Tex cagoules and stretch pants necessary to avoid becoming the sloth of the slopes. Then you've got to trek halfway around the world to actually participate. And it's cold, and you'll probably do your knees in. And it's actually really hard. Face it, you're bound to come a cropper, or at the very least be shown up by a bunch of cocky, long-haired kids.

Compare that scenario with the one currently taking place in my living room. The preparation has involved nothing greater than a trip to the offie; it's warm, there's a comfortable seat for everyone and, while the contest is as fierce as any you're likely to find on the competition slopes of Calgary, there's no likelihood of physical strain and the toilet is never more than ten paces away.

Having selected the best multi-player options that the world of winter sport console sims has to offer (which these days means snowboarding, snowboarding and more snowboarding – skiing's for geeks and minor royalty), the Games Night crew are ready to discover who's going to rip the hips and who has the hips that rip. I'm stoked – let's ride.

7.57pm

Cool Boarders 3, SCEE, PlayStation



You'd have to be some kind of crazy to suggest that *Cool Boarders 2* wasn't a huge leap in gaming technology beyond the original, but what fate the brand new trequel? Graphically, the riders certainly look the part, the courses are more varied

Games Night

and the trickology has advanced to the point where you're battering the joypad like some *Tekken* pro at each jump, to pull off ridiculous moves with even more ridiculous names. Frankly though, we're not interested in backside 360s or stalefish rodeos. We simply want to jib and freeride our way to the bottom of the hill and the last one there is a bobble-hatted twerp.

It's difficult to avoid selecting the downhill course entitled Devil's Butt, so, of course, we did. Robin and Mark were the first to do battle, but would their now-pumping adrenaline carry them all the way to the, er... bottom of the course?

Robin: "It may be too early to say this, but *Cool Boarders 3* is actually a bit dull."

Mark (cruising to victory): "This is the first time I've played the game, but it isn't much of a challenge. In fact, I'm shocked and appalled at how easy it is."

Andrea: "You're meant to choose the character that looks most like you, aren't you? Although I'm not sure I really resemble Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards."

Rich: "Robin always chooses women, so what does that tell us?"

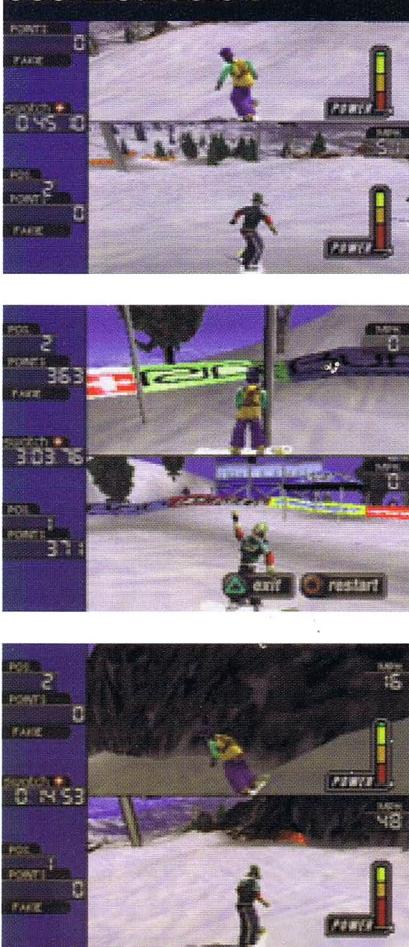
Andrea: "I think it's just because he wants to control women. I mean, he's not allowed to do it at home!"

Not wanting to let the potentially gruesome personal details of Robin and Andrea's relationship ruin the taste of good beer, we slide swiftly on. And it's fun, to some extent.

After a while we have all acquainted ourselves with the shrimpies and railslides, and had a right old lark with the fact that players can punch each other at the start of each race. But, though this is definitely the PlayStation's best snowboard sim (and a ★★★★ game in the first issue of *Arcade*), something's missing. The consensus is that *Cool Boarders 3*'s simply too slow, too easy (even when you whack up the difficulty level), and soundtracked by an increasingly irritating breakbeat loop.

"It's not even any fun winning!" cries Mark, and from a man who spends his entire month ensconced in an attic room practising the Games Night games in order to laud his petty victories over the rest of us, this is criticism indeed.

Cool Boarders 3



Jibbing and railsliding is easy when you know how. In fact, a little too easy...

9.10pm

Phat Air Extreme Snowboarding, Funsoft, PlayStation



On my borrowed *Phat Air Extreme Snowboarding* disc, some wag has crossed out the word "Air" and replaced it with "Ass". However, this turns out to be well-reasoned graffiti – the game stinks worse than a pig's backside.

First, we are confronted with a cacophony at the character options screen (Rich runs with Andrea's assertion that we should choose the characters that look most like ourselves by picking Cherry Boy). The din continues into the game itself; the music

Phat Air Extreme Snowboarding



In their rush to cram this game full of truly "rad" gear and "phat" sounds, they forgot to make it fun to play. Oh well, back to the beer.

When we reach the finish line, it's accompanied by a sigh of relief rather than a shriek of victory...

here is just as bad as the stuff in *Cool Boarders 3*, but louder. We turn the sound off and stick UNKLE on the stereo instead.

But it gets worse. *Phat Air*, in its wisdom, has decided that we would prefer a left-right split screen for the two-player race, preventing us from seeing more than two yards of snow in front of our boards. Back we go to the options screen to select a top-bottom split. This is already tiresome.

Mark: "Can we stop now?"

He has yet to reach the bottom of his first run. Then his board seems to stick to the ground and he gives up.

Andrea: "These graphics are terrible. I rode through that rock like it wasn't there."

Rich: "If we're talking realism, then those snowboards are too small."

Although the rest of us have no real idea of how long a snowboard should be, we're willing to take his word for it. With unresponsive controls and unimaginative courses, *Phat Air* is awful from beginning to end. When we reach the finish line, it's accompanied by a sigh of relief rather than a shriek of victory.

Robin: "Why can't we play *Horace Goes Skiing*? Now there was a game."

Mark: "Yeah, that was a true simulation of the skiing experience because you had to

The joypad jury

Five people who'll be coming down the mountain when they come. Eventually.

Matt and Neil cried off sick (hung over, we all suspected), forcing us to drag new blood into the Games Night arena, in the shape of Robin's Mrs, Andrea, who happens to be our very first Games Night girl. Her presence, it turned out, would only up the blue language quotient...



Robin
Arcade's Reviews
Ed has never tangled with real slopes, but brings to the contest experience of a solitary dry skiing trip to Pontypool.



Rich
The only one with any snowboarding experience, Rich visited the Alpine slopes during college, mocking the concept of student poverty.



Andrea
She may be Robin's girlfriend, but she's here on merit. Andrea was a bit of a demon ice skater in her time, learning the craft at the Bristol Mecca rink.



Mark
Pallid weakling Mark has never really been the outdoor type – the closest he's been to winter sports is losing a snowball fight. Pathetic.



Sam
Sam's closest snowboarding experience was a visit to Aviemore in Scotland. He was thwarted in his attempt to ski by too much snow.

Snowboard Kids



■ It may be a kiddy game, but its furious four-player contest provoked some strictly X-rated language from our normally civil panel. Like, "Which fucker turned me into a snowman?"

cross a busy road to buy your skis before you could even get to the slopes." Nostalgic tears well in everyone's eyes. And Phat Air gets consigned to the bin.

9.51pm

Snowboard Kids, Atlus, Nintendo 64



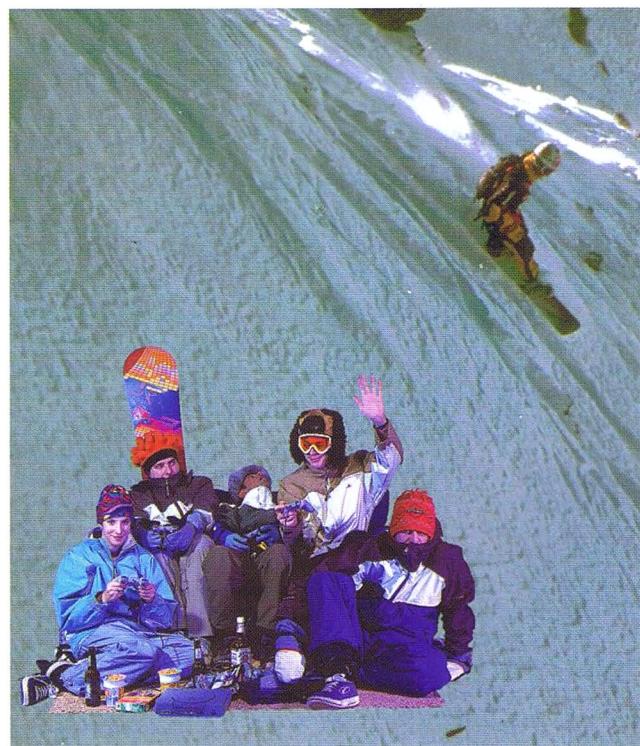
After a visit to the fridge, I return to the living room to find Robin sitting blankly in front of the telly, wondering why the N64 won't start. But once the plug-to-wall-socket concept is explained, we're ready for Snowboard Kids, a game where realism is banished in favour of a winter wonderland full of snowmen, penguins and the greatest power-ups this side of *R-Type*.

With no real need to spend time replicating the moves of real snowboarders, Snowboard Kids has spent more effort designing a bunch of interesting courses, which make turns, jumps and drops entirely alien to real experience – but which are ultimately much more entertaining. Your characters may be a bunch of freakish cartoon youngsters, but the four-player battle mode is vicious, with everyone racing to collect the best power-ups, which you can use to encase your opponents in blocks of solid ice, send them high into the air on umbrellas or (hilariously) turn them into hopeless, uncontrollable snowmen.

The game has invented a novel way of creating a downhill course with "laps" by providing a chairlift which returns you to the top of the slope. This entirely fantastical

game therefore provides the most realistic portrayal of snowboarding behaviour we see all evening, as our little kid characters knock each other to the ground in a desperate *Gladiators*-like scramble to be first on the lift.

Snowboard Kids is a blast and makes for the most hard-fought action of the night. Mark claims rookie status, but betrays himself by immediately humming along to



1080° Snowboarding



■ The closest any of the Games Night panel will get to real snowboarding in a long time. The best sim around.

the incessant (but strangely comforting) theme music. Our favourite course is Dizzyland, an "after-hours amusement park" – "Ooh," exclaims Andrea, "that sounds a bit dodgy" – which turns out to be nothing but good clean fun. With victory generally hinging on the most skillful application of power-ups, we're all in with a shout, although Mark is again crowned the eventual winner. He then reveals that he took the game back to the shop after being disappointed when he first bought it.

Everyone: "Fool!"

Mark: (whining) "But I had no-one to play it with. I didn't realise the multi-player mode was so good."

In fact, the four-player option has only one disadvantage – there's a worrying reduction in graphic quality when you split the screen. But this many drinks down the line, we convince ourselves it's probably just our eyes anyway, and get on with enjoying what will, from this day forward, be known as the *Mario Kart* of the slopes.

Andrea: "I'm annoyed that I'm bad at it, because I really like it."

11.09pm

1080° Snowboarding, Nintendo, N64



Back to reality, but this time it's a wholly more enjoyable reality, as 1080° proves to be the best snowboarding sim around. It's difficult to describe why, but the snowboarding experience just feels right. The landscape, sound and

Games Night

playability all combine to create the feel of the piste. You almost want to step through the screen and start building snowmen in the deep powder. Robin's eyes begin to mist. **Robin:** "This actually feels like you're cutting through real snow. In *Cool Boarders 3* you might as well have been on a road."

Rich begins to show off, since he's recently been compiling tips on *1080°* for this very magazine. He may be perfecting the indy nosebone, while the rest of us stack hard (crash) while cornering the simplest of bends, but what if he were actually to lose? Why, you wouldn't be able to trust his tips (or, indeed, anything he writes) ever again. Inevitably, Robin thrashes him in a simple downhill challenge, showing that sticking true to your line and crouching for speed is always more advantageous than spinning about in the air like a spawn-crazed salmon. Rich retires in shame.

Meanwhile, Andrea is quite content for the race to progress halfway down the hill before she realises that she's holding an inert controller and the contest is actually between myself and Mark. Ladies and gentlemen, it's that time of night.

Robin: "The catch-up feature on this game works really well. It means that you are always in with a chance against ponces like Rich."

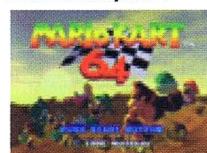
Andrea: "I think having the camera placed near the ground is important. The game feels more... exhilarating."

Mark: "The only complaint I'd make is that it's really annoying when the damage counter reaches full and someone wins the game by default. It's a hollow victory."

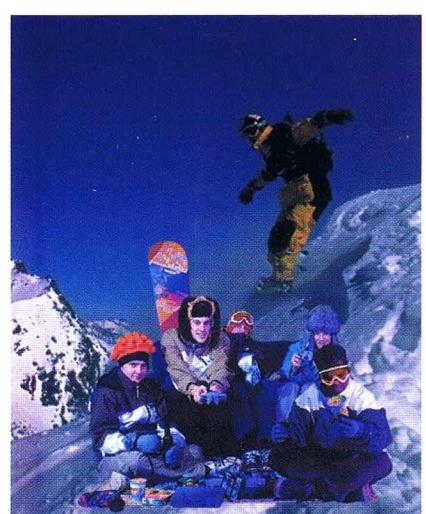
Having just beaten Mark in this very way, I beg to disagree.

11.46pm

Mario Kart 64 (ice levels), Nintendo, N64



On agreement that it's far too late in the evening to start messing about with the gamut of events included in *Nagano Winter Olympics*, we resort to that old multi-player standby, *Mario Kart*. We justify this to ourselves by playing only on Frappe



Mario Kart 64 (ice levels)



■ In a rapidly emerging Games Night tradition, here is *Mario Kart* again (the ice levels are a legitimate excuse). This game's ability to wreck friendships, relationships and carpets is legendary. But if we really do pick the characters most like ourselves, why has Rich chosen camp plumber Mario? And why is Mark the rather scaly Yoshi?

Snowland and Sherbet Land, the two courses set in some kind of Antarctic paradise, complete with blue penguins and much slippage of wheels.

Mark: "Do you think we'll find an excuse to play *Mario Kart* on every Games Night from now on?"

Proceedings are beginning to get a little frayed as we all scramble toward that last opportunity for Games Night success. There is shouting, there is screaming, there is alcohol on the carpet and there is Mark skating round the course in virtual autopilot, as though he has played it literally millions of times before. Which he has.

I accidentally select DK, the hapless ape, but still manage to overtake Robin and Andrea on the final bend. The couple appear to be having some kind of on-screen domestic and are more intent on knocking each other into the icy pool than reaching the finishing line. Finally, Robin snaps.

Robin: "I hate videogames! Aaaarrghhh!" **Mark:** (sporting a very sinister grin) "No-one will ever beat me at *Mario Kart*!"

Mark proceeds to enact a bizarre war dance around the room, knocking over beer cans and stamping Wheat Crunchies into the carpet. Andrea and Robin have both collapsed in exhaustion, but nothing has been seen of Rich since he left Mario spinning in circles on Lap 2.

A search of the house reveals that Rich has already gone home to lick his wounds – and no doubt get some practice in for next time, even though we haven't told him what the theme is yet. With him out of the

running, things swiftly draw to a conclusion. So there you have it: our second Games Night. It's once again left friendships – even relationships – in tatters. Inevitably, my house has been rendered a complete tip. Just imagine what it's going to be like when some real snow falls round here and someone suggests a snowball fight... **A**

Games Night picks

Hazy conclusions drawn from our strenuous night on the snowboarding slopes...

1) Realism is fine, but you need to go the whole hog, providing players with some sense of exhilaration.

Getting the likes of Swatch and Burton on board does not necessarily mean their boards are going to ride like the real thing.

2) The downfall of realistic sims in a multi-player situation is that the only thing you can do to wind up your mates is beat them to the line. Something like *Snowboard Kids* has more potential. Even if you don't win a race, you can at least bask in the satisfaction of turning your buddies into snowmen.

3) Endlessly looping breakbeats are no substitute for a proper theme tune.

4) Anyone offended by staggering profanity should keep well away from a Games Night.

5) No way are you getting me anywhere near a real piste.

The Winner *Snowboard Kids*

Furious four-player action and a multitude of hilarious power-ups

made this cartoon racer the firm favourite. Completion of this article was delayed by impromptu games in the office.

Runner-up

1080° Realistic touches made it feel like racing on real snow. The two-player races were boosted by a catch-up feature, and the clothes are suitably lurid. Full style to the max.



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16

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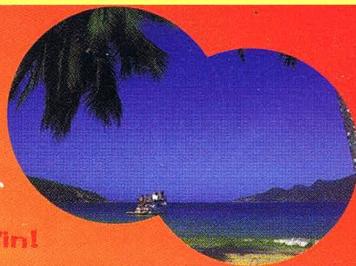
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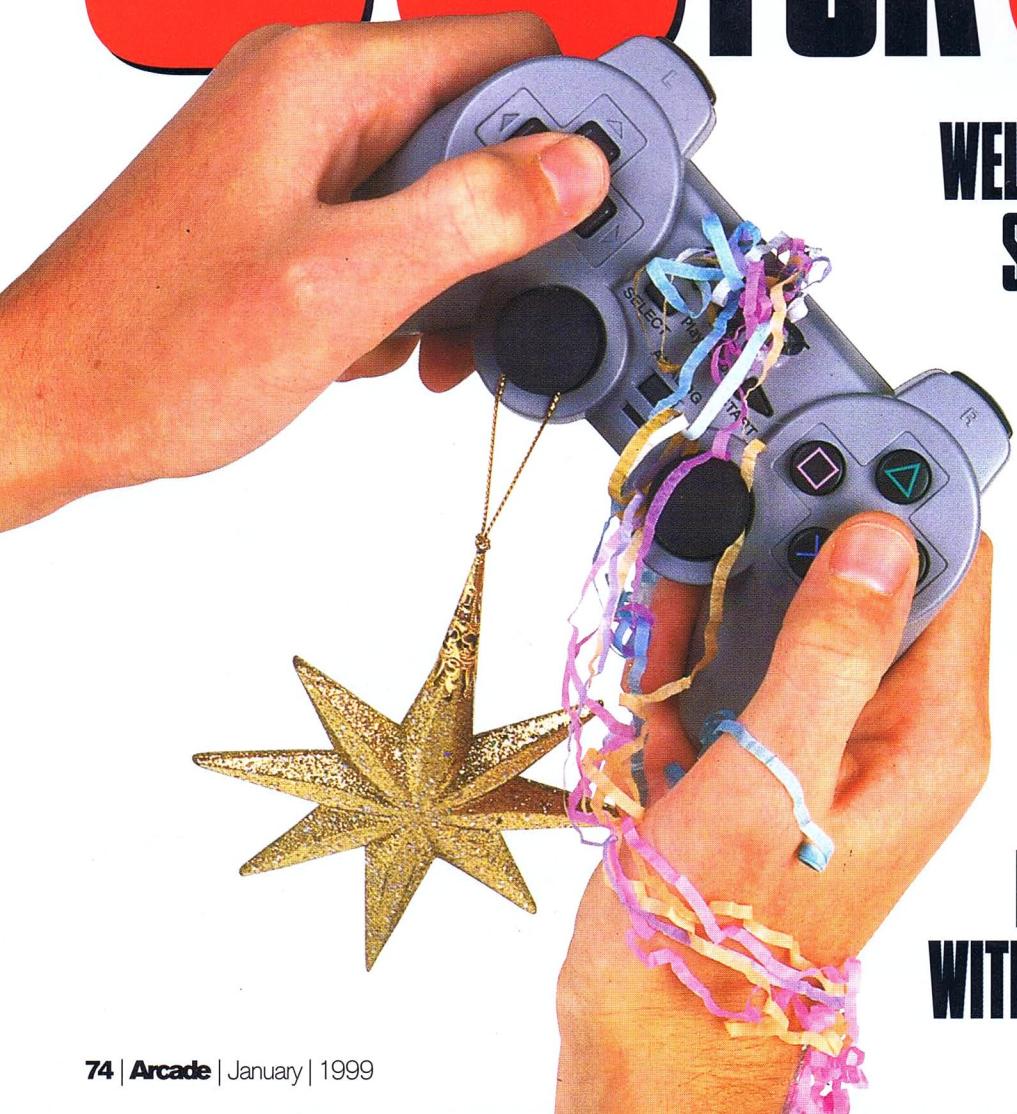


SPECIAL PREVIEW

99 '99 FOR '99

Compiled by | Sam Richards

WELCOME TO ARCADE'S GIANT-SIZED 1999 PREVIEW PARTY, PACKED WITH HOT GAMES TO ROCK OUR YEAR. ALL THE MAJOR SYSTEMS ARE COVERED, BUT NOT, WE'RE HAPPY TO SAY, EVERY MAJOR RELEASE. 1999'S LOOKING JUST TOO PACKED WITH GREAT GAMES FOR THAT....

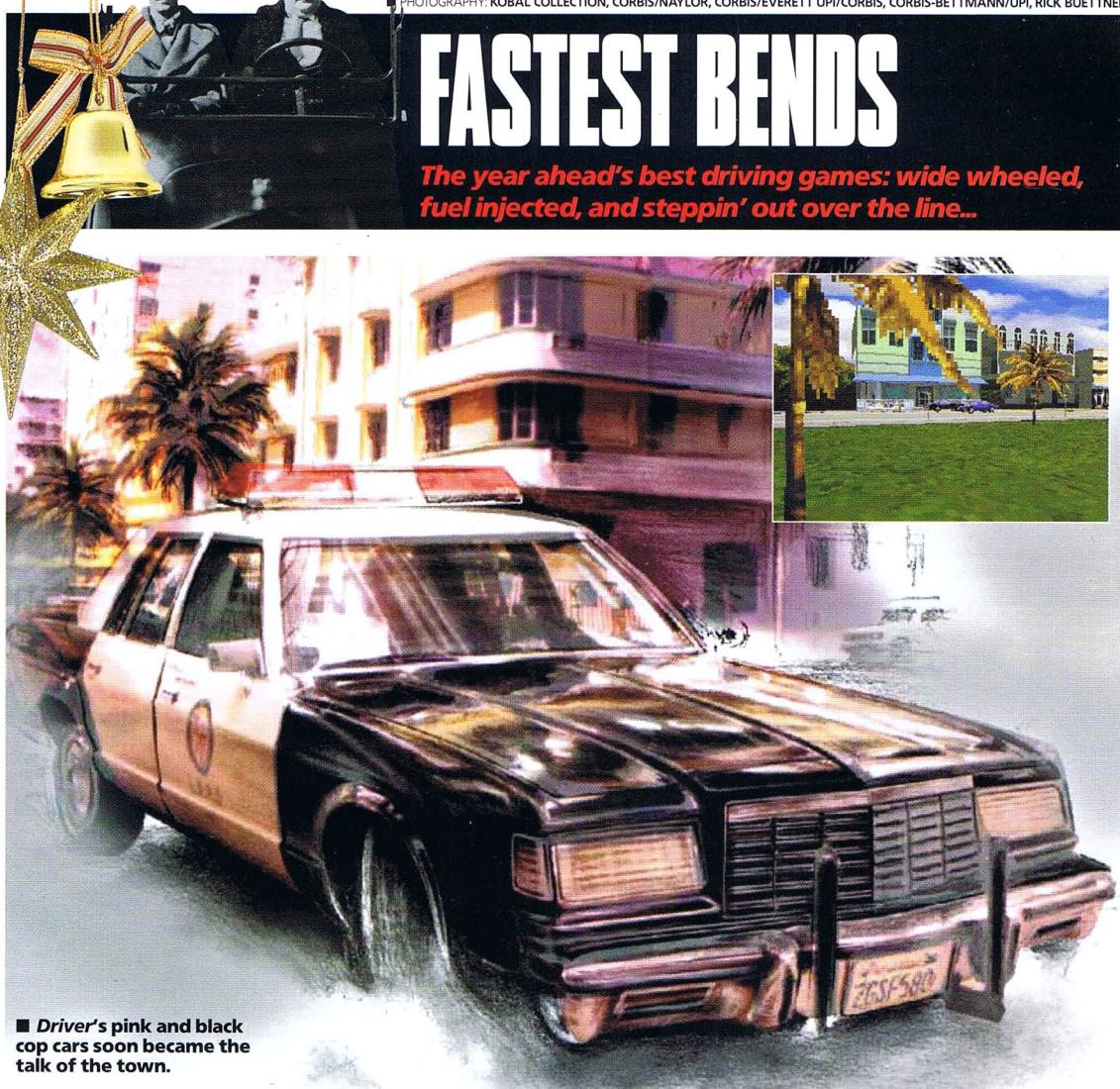


How are you going to keep yourself warm this winter? You could turn the heating to max. You could layer the jumpers till you're of Michelin Man proportions. Or you could settle down in front of the fire with some hot buttered toast, a steaming Bovril and Arcade's pick of the hottest games for the coming year. It's all here: Britain's favourite genre (from *Daikatana* to *Duke Nukem Forever*, it's 3D shooters a-go-go), one or two old friends returning to show off new systems (Sega's *Sonic Adventure* promises to be eye-popping), older dogs learning new tricks (Mario himself in his first UK-release role playing game), near-forgotten favourites reappearing out of nowhere (*Space Invaders* is back! And *R-Type!* And *Donkey Kong!*), the big getting bigger (who believes *Final Fantasy VIII* won't be colossal?), the famous getting famouser (new *Resident Evil*, *Gran Turismo* and *Virtua Fighter* offerings all vying for Biggest Thing Ever status), and even (get this!) a bunch of really original new games. It's all red-hot stuff, cooled only by the refreshing breeze you'll create as you flick through the next 20 pages, jaw a-gape in wonder.

Index

Over the next 20 pages...

- 75 Fastest Bends**
- 77 Nastiest Bruises**
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- 86 Scariest Scenarios**
- 88 Oddest Adventures**
- 89 Newest Icons**
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- 92 Beefiest Blasts**
- 93 Longest Nights**
- 94 Ugliest Enemies**



■ Driver's pink and black cop cars soon became the talk of the town.

PLAYSTATION PC

1

Driver

■ Developer: **Reflections**
■ Publisher: **TBA** ■ Release date: **April**

"Be" Ryan O'Neal in this high octane cocktail of classic yank tanks, banks jobs, and rubber-shredding action.

■ **What is it?** Ever wondered why there wasn't a *Destruction Derby 3*? Because the series' creator Reflections retired to its sunny Gateshead HQ to come up with this – a driving game taking the name and the attitude of Walter Hill's 1978 tyre-squealer.

Imagine the cars of *DD2* with improved handling, realistic independent suspension and better looks, driving around near-as-dammit models of four American cities, running red lights, mounting pavements and leading frantic multi-police car chases. Now add missions of the *Grand Theft Auto* variety (you drive a getaway car from a bank heist, or deliver packages of Peruvian marching powder) and in a nutshell you've got *Driver*.

■ **Why should I care?** We know that Reflections is a master of motors, and the car-handling and collision model in *Driver* (tyre tracks are left on roads, hub caps fly off, trash cans are

PHOTOGRAPHY: KOBAL COLLECTION, CORBIS/NAYLOR, CORBIS/EVERETT UPI/CORBIS, CORBIS-BETTMANN/UPI, RICK BUETTNER

FASTEST BENDS

The year ahead's best driving games: wide wheeled, fuel injected, and steppin' out over the line...

side-swiped and litter-filled narrow alleys are pelted down) is second to none. The cities (Miami, San Francisco, New York and LA) are as big as the real thing, more or less, and the different missions and tasks should maintain interest levels at a healthy high.

■ **Watch out for:** The replay option. After a particularly pleasing car chase you can take control of the cameras, moving them to just the right spot as your skill outwits and totals tens of hapless cop cars, recreating *Bullitt*, *Gumball Rally* or *Gone in 60 Seconds*.



PLAYSTATION PC

Roll Cage

■ Developer: **Attention to Detail** ■ Publisher: **Psynopsis** ■ Release date: **March**

It's like WipEout, but with flippable buggies that're equally happy driving upside-down.

■ **What is it?** Imagine *WipEout* but with wheels, on lager rather than disco drugs, and shifting to a big beat soundtrack rather than

head-nodding techno, and you're getting close. The cars are like those remote control ones that flip over when they hit a wall and the tracks are designed to let you test these clever-clog motors to their limits. Driving on the ceiling is encouraged, while a range of pick up weapons allow explosions to wrack the almost pop-up free circuits.

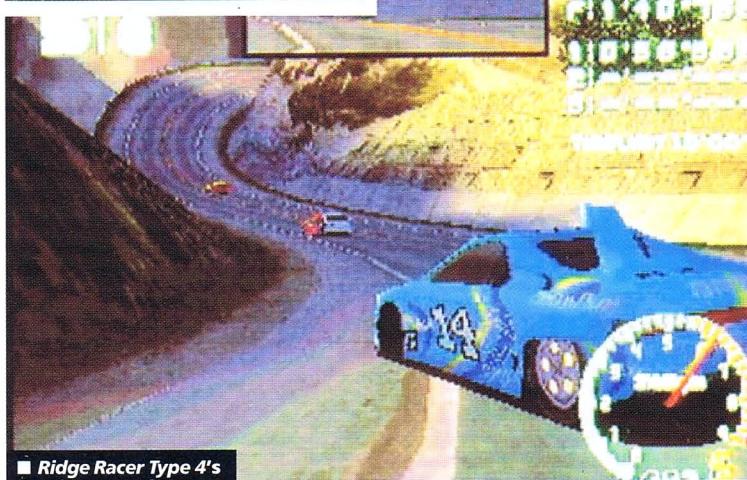
■ **Why should I care?** Because it's not trying as hard as *WipEout* to be cool, this could actually turn out to be even more fun to play than the PlayStation's

original future racer. It should also have a far gentler learning curve and generally funkier feel. This time round there's much more emphasis on spoiling opponent's races with your heavy weaponry and less on perfecting air-braking racing lines. Because your balloon-tyred buggy's more or less unstoppable, *Mario Kart*-like riotousness abounds, particularly in the two-player mode.

■ **Watch out for:** Falling chunks of masonry as track-side buildings collapse on top of your motor.



FASTEST BENDS



Ridge Racer Type 4's graphics promise to be stunning. Naturally.



PLAYSTATION



R4: Ridge Racer Type 4

■ Developer: Namco
■ Publisher: Namco

■ Release date: March (TBC)

One of gaming's most famous racing series returns – and in stunning form.

What is it? The latest in the ageing series of *Ridge Racer* games for PlayStation promises to recapture much of its previous glory. *Gran Turismo* may have stolen the PlayStation racing crown, but now Namco wants it back. **Why should I care?** Because it looks as if Namco may well succeed. The company is certainly pulling no punches in making sure the game launches with a big splash in Japan around Christmas '98. As well as a competitive new Grand Prix mode, *RR4* is set to include eight tracks and more than 300 car variations. The scenery is said to be gorgeous, and you can expect to see some big graphical improvements to

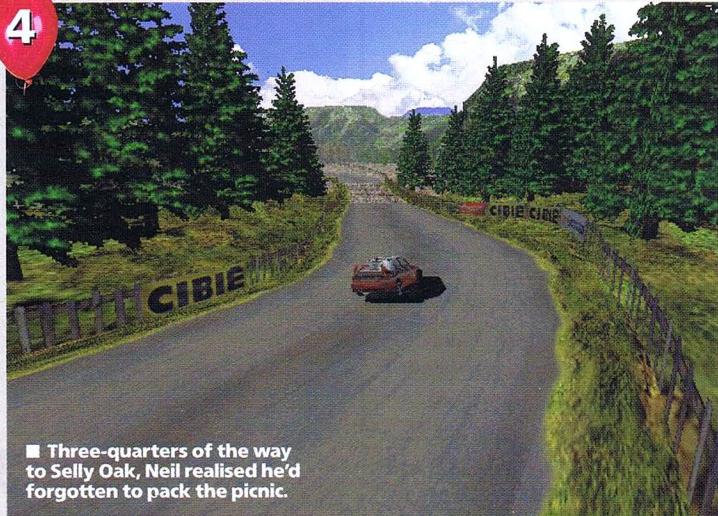
the multi-vehicle stack-ups. Free with the new *RR* game comes a special enhanced version of the original *Ridge Racer*, along with a demo disc featuring other Namco hits such as the RPG *Tales of Destiny*, soccer contender *Libero Grande*, the fighting classic *Tekken 3* and the action-packed *Kaze No Kuronoa*. Namco's even releasing a special version of *RR4* with its own steering wheel controller.

Sony's new PocketStation gizmo (it's like a miniature Game Boy that plugs into your PlayStation's memory card slot) will also add extra features to the game. If you're the proud owner of a PocketStation (and why not? They will only cost about £20) then you can use it to download customisable car information and race your favourite vehicles at a friend's house. All in all, then, we're talking one of 1999's biggest releases from one of Japan's videogame giants.

Watch out for: Quite simply, some of the most lush and detailed graphics ever seen on PlayStation.



4



Three-quarters of the way to Selly Oak, Neil realised he'd forgotten to pack the picnic.

DREAMCAST

Sega Rally 2

■ Developer: Sega
■ Publisher: Sega
■ Release date: September (TBC)

The driving force behind Sega's new 128-bit superconsole.

What is it? Over the years, Sega has earned a reputation for delivering some of the world's best coin-ops. *Sega Rally 2* is currently state-of-the-art in terms of tight-cornerin', grit-sprayin' rallying thrills, and now it's coming home.

Why should I care? *Sega Rally 2* has only been in the arcades for six months or so – we really are talking state of the art here. If Sega can deliver anything like a close, recognisable conversion – with all the speed, features (like the choice of six different cars plus bonus vehicles) and glorious graphics of the original more or

less intact – to its Dreamcast home system in the short amount of time it's allowed itself (the game is actually scheduled for release in Japan in the very last days of '98, though we'll get it towards the end of the year, naturally), the company should have a serious hit on its hands. But, amazingly enough, Sega's aiming even higher, hoping to improve on the arcade version by including a customise-your-car option (giving you the chance to fiddle about with gear ratios, brake balance and suspension), a ten-year championship mode (with each year featuring four distinct seasons), a split-screen two-player mode and even an eight-car multiplayer game designed to be used with Dreamcast's built-in modem.

Watch out for: An in-car navigator who occasionally calls you "baby." No, we're serious.

State-of-the-art in terms of tight-cornerin', grit-sprayin' rallying

5



NINTENDO 64

Micro Machines 64 Turbo

■ Developer: Codemasters
■ Publisher: Codemasters
■ Release date: February

Speedy racing with the smallest cars in the whole wide world.

What is it? It's a new version of the classic toy-car 3D-esque racer, based on essential real-life training tracks like school desks and kitchen table-tops. *Micro Machines* comes complete



with the distinctive high-up, top-down viewpoint and time-gobbling multi-player mode that made the earlier PC and PlayStation versions such a treat.

Why should I care? A decent conversion should offer the funniest and most frantic racing this side of *The Cannonball Run*, with up to eight players taking

part thanks to a joypad-sharing design. Chuck in 48 courses and the chance to construct your very own customised car, and there'll be N64 owners crying with happiness come '99.

Watch out for: Interesting wrist fractures, garnered as you attempt to share your controller with another player.



PC

6 Rally Championship '99

■ Developer: **Europress**■ Publisher: **Europress**
■ Release date: **Spring**

Mud-splattered, wall-hitting, crowd-avoiding, ditch-dumping RAC rally action.

■ **What is it?** The original Network Q RAC Rally Championship was praised for its photorealistic backdrops, but also for an authentic road that varied from tricky over-cambered tracks that could dump you into a ditch at the slightest wrong move to concave routes with high banks to bash into. It was also, however, criticised on three different counts. The first was that it suffered from "glass tunnel" syndrome, in that you were kept strictly to the track, no matter what you did. The second was that it was horrendously hard to control with keys: an analogue joystick was a must. The third was that the name was too long, and reducing it to NQRACRC looked silly.

■ **Why should I care?** Rally Championship '99 aims to improve matters on all counts. It'll remove all signs of the glass wall. The tracks are no longer single and restrictive, but based on Ordnance Survey maps, with forks, dead ends, hidden routes and very few limitations on where you can drive. There are over ten rally cars available, each with new tumbling and collision routines. Even the name is a vast improvement.

■ **Watch out for:** Sharp corners. Cows. Stray punters. The usual stuff.

NASTIEST BRUISES

Do you believe there's no gain without pain? '99 has a bunch of games that agree with you...



PLAYSTATION PC

7

No Fear Downhill Mountain Biking

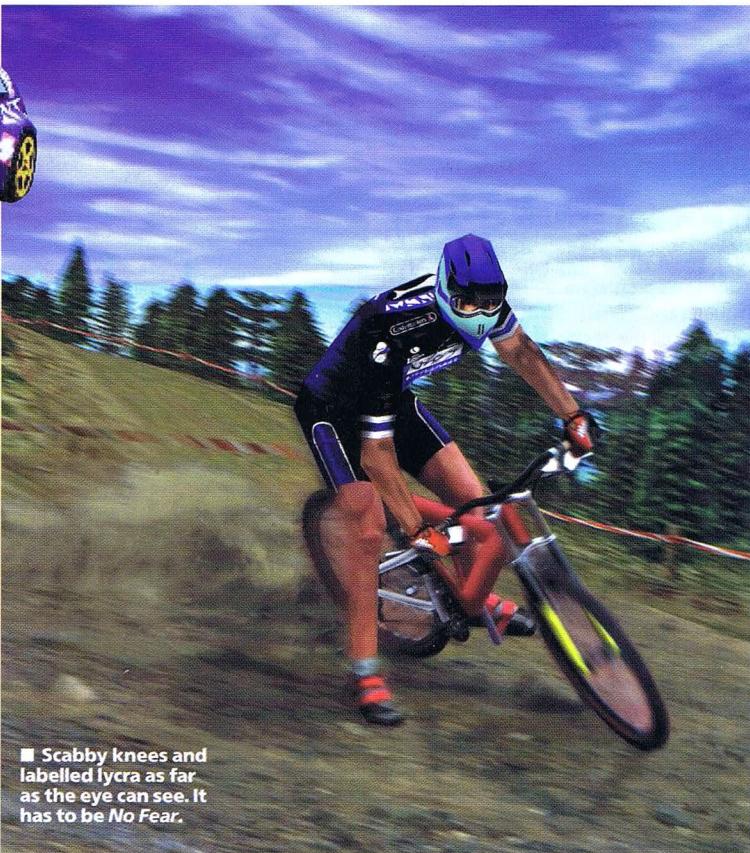
- Developer: **Codemasters**
- Publisher: **Codemasters**
- Release date: **Spring**

Just about the first mountain biking game since Mountain Bike Simulator on Spectrum...

■ **What is it?** Ever since boys discovered that turning the rear mudguard upside down on a Grifter makes it sound a bit like a motorbike, they have been fascinated by push-bikes – and, in particular, the knobbly-tyred off-road hobbies. It's fast. It's varied. It makes you wonder why videogaming has coughed up so few bike sims over the years...

■ **Why should I care?** The downhill tracks span ten international locations, from the dusty deserts of Morocco to the volcanoes of Japan. You'll be able to adapt your suspension and brakes for the varying terrain, and upgrades will become available as the game progresses. And you should expect championships, single races, time trials and a split-screen two-player option. No Fear is a simulation in the style of TOCA or Colin McRae, where getting to grips with your bike's handling is going to be as important as learning the twists and turns of the tracks.

■ **Watch out for:** A multitude of assorted shameless references to the No Fear clothing label.



■ Scabby knees and labelled lyrca as far as the eye can see. It has to be No Fear.



NINTENDO 64

Snowboard Kids II

- Developer: **Racdym**
- Publisher: **Atlus**
- Release date: **Spring**

Watch small children smack themselves up on the white stuff. Again – ha ha!

■ **What is it?** A tongue-in-cheek cutesy snowboarding game, with simplistic controls and courses liberally littered with little penguins and snowmen. Additions to this snowy sequel

include customisable characters (including four newbies), 15 new boards, bosses to defeat and an improved multi-player mode.

■ **Why should I care?** The original Snowboard Kids was fast, simple fun; easy to pick up, difficult to master, but a laugh all the way – and it boasted one of the most enjoyable multi-player experiences that's available on Nintendo (and anywhere). If the sequel manages to improve on matters, publisher Atlus is bound to be on to a winner.

■ **Watch out for:** The new big boss character Damien. Is he actually the devil in disguise? We're beginning to think so...

it's a wrestling game. Details are still scarce, but expect the usual gaggle of brainless six-packs pretending to cause injury to their comrades. As most of the strength of previous grappling games has come from their multi-player modes, you can expect plenty of doubled-up leotard action, too.

■ **Why should I care?** Warzone defied the rubbishness of its chosen sport and turned out rather well, with wrestlers lovingly crafted in hi-res, a stay-up-all-night multi-player game and the too-good-to-be-true create-a-wrestler option. The release of Attitude should offer all that and lots more.

■ **Watch out for:** Some bone-crunching moves, designed to make your eyes water.

NINTENDO 64

WWF Attitude

- Developer: **Iguana Entertainment**
- Publisher: **Acclaim Entertainment**
- Release date: **TBA**

WWF Warzone spawns an oiled-up wrestling sequel.

■ **What is it?** Well, surprisingly,

Expect the usual gaggle of brainless six-packs

HARDEST PUNCHES

Where winners rarely abide by Marquis of Queensbury rules...



Oodles of special moves plus a magic-and-fighting story line

PLAYSTATION

10 Ehrgeiz

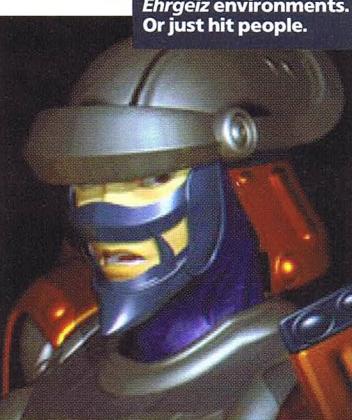
■ Developer **Namco/Squaresoft**
■ Publisher **TBA** ■ Release date **TBA**

Cloud, Tifa and pals return in 1999's dream ticket.

■ **What is it?** While most western eyes were fixed on the *Final Fantasy VIII* demo that came bundled with Square's *Brave Fencer Musashiden*, the more learned gamer clicked on the playable demo of *Ehrgeiz*. And wasn't disappointed. Co-produced by Namco and



Square, *Ehrgeiz* is a 3D action/beat-'em-up with all the techie strengths of the bods that produced *Tekken 3* and *Final Fantasy VII*. An arcade release in North America and Japan only, *Ehrgeiz* boasts fully interactive environments (think *Bushido Blade*, but better), 360° control, oodles of special moves plus a magic-and-fighting story line worthy of *Tekken* itself. Not enough? Well, there's the small matter of a few hidden guest stars – namely, Cloud, Tifa, Vincent, Sephiroth and Yuffie of *Final Fantasy VII* fame! "God Bless The Ring!" runs the foreboding



legend adorning the *Ehrgeiz* Web site (<http://www.drf.co.jp/acd/index.html>). Damn straight.

■ **Why should I care?** Because this is possibly a good idea of what *Tekken 4* could look like.

■ **Watch out for:** The PlayStation-only Quest mode – not in the arcades and perfect for RPGheadz.



DREAMCAST

11 & 12 Marvel Vs Capcom

■ Developer: **Capcom**
■ Publisher: **Capcom**
■ Release date: **Winter**

The cartoon beat-'em-up series finally finds its feet with Sega's new system.

■ **What is it?** After a whole bunch of so-so beat-'em-ups, featuring various groupings of characters from the Capcom back catalogue, *Marvel Vs Capcom* looks to be the one that will finally have the kids

flocking back to the arcades. And guess what? It's getting a Dreamcast conversion.

■ **Why should we care?** Bigger combos, faster action, tag-team contests and loud, loud colours. The character list is set to include the big-name likes of Ryu, Jin and Megaman on one side and Spider-Man, Wolverine and Captain America on the other.

■ **Watch out for:** Characters rolling into huge combos from the sidelines whenever their partners are taking a beating.

PLAYSTATION PC

13 Saboteur

■ Developer: **Tigon**
■ Publisher: **EIDOS**
■ Release date: **May**

One ninja... and his dog.

■ **What is it?** Third person action featuring a ninja and his leg-savaging pet. EIDOS is calling it a cross between *Tomb Raider* and *Soul Blade*, with puzzles, exploration and weapon-based combat tied into a strong story line which developer Tigon, er, "hasn't finalised yet". There'll be 30 or more characters to set

your hound a-savaging, and full interaction with the surrounding scenery is promised.

■ **Why should I care?** Well, for a start your pooch could turn out to be an interesting feature. It'll be CPU controlled for the most part, but you'll be able to send it leaping toward enemies throats using the appropriate button press.

Graphically the game's already looking very slick, with some detailed characters and impressive locations.

■ **Watch out for:** Man's best friend helping out when called upon and thus earning a big tickle under the ears.

13



DREAMCAST

Powerstone

■ Developer: **Capcom** ■ Publisher: **Capcom** ■ Release date: **Winter**

Innovative new beat-'em-up where everyday furniture becomes part of your impromptu weaponry.

■ **What is it?** A graphically stunning beat-'em-up, set in large arenas, where you can pick up objects and use them during fighting. Few details abound, but *Powerstone* should be an intriguing alternative to existing beat-'em-ups.

■ **Why should I care?** It's from arcade giants Capcom, a company that's home to the once world-dominating *Street Fighter* games. *Powerstone* could take button-bashing to a new dimension.

■ **Watch out for:** Flying masonry.



PLAYSTATION

14 Street Fighter Alpha 3

■ Developer: **Capcom**
■ Publisher: **Capcom**
■ Release date: **TBC**

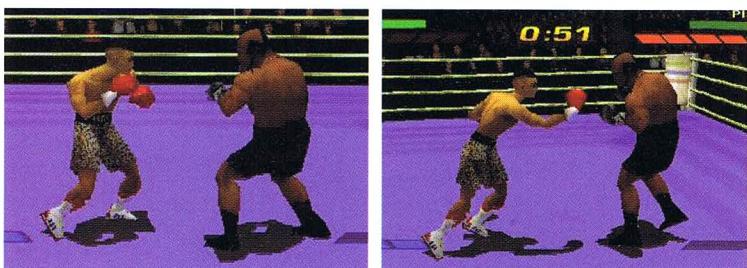
The *Street Fighter* series is back, and still defiantly in 2D.

■ **What is it?** The latest and potentially greatest game in the most successful beat-'em-up series ever. *Street Fighter Alpha 3* looks like being a stunning conversion of the peerless 2D arcade scrapper, with the largest collection of characters (over 25 at last count) in any SF game and sense-assaulting special effects. There'll be several additions to the game's still unmatched combat mechanics, with a guard gauge that depletes as you block and a fistful of new super-move options squaring up alongside the usual PlayStation-specific ways to play.

■ **Why should I care?** It should be the best *Street Fighter* game yet, with spectacular 2D graphics layered on top of Capcom's tried, tested and newly tweaked fighting system. It'll also be PocketStation-compatible, enabling you to save characters to Sony's PDA, then upload them into a proper game.

■ **Watch out for:** Honda – the face slapping sumo character makes a long overdue return to the SF series!

■ Naseem's mother finally found a way to stop him biting his nails.



PLAYSTATION PC

15 Prince Naseem Boxing

■ Developer: Codemasters
■ Publisher: Codemasters
■ Release date: Spring

Boxing game featuring the undefeated 23-year-old WBO Featherweight Champion.

■ **What is it?** You know the Prince, of course. He's the one with the girly leopard-skin shorts, who is (at time of writing) undefeated in 31 fights, having knocked out 28 of his opponents. Some may argue the relevance of a sportsman lending his name to a game (were Colin McRae's rally and Pete Sampras' tennis

games actually better for the official endorsements?), but Naseem's great showmanship and skill are certainly two credentials that lend themselves to a relevant tie-in.

■ **Why should I care?** Boxing games have always suffered from limited moves; compared to *Tekken*-style epics, full of elaborate kicks, punches and special attacks, boxing's less spectacular high punch/low punch options can feel a little tired at times. *Nas Boxing* aims to rectify this problem, balancing the requirements of accurate boxing sim and fun arcade game.

■ **Watch out for:** Nas' reaction to the reviews when they come in.



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PLAYSTATION

16 X-Men

■ Developer: Syrox Development
■ Publisher: Activision
■ Release date: Autumn

Liked Capcom's *X-Men Vs Street Fighter*? You'll like this more...

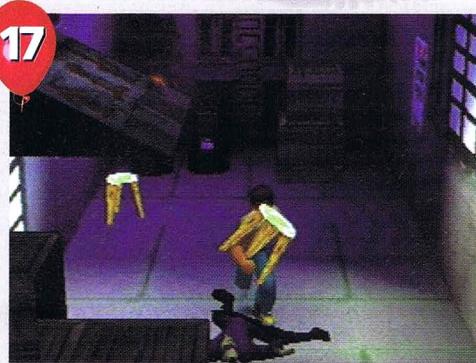
■ **What is it?** Angry mutated teenagers in long johns. ■ **Why should I care?** Because these particular angry mutated teenagers in long johns have been selling millions of comics since the mid-'80s. Rejecting the style of Capcom's increasingly dated 2D translations, Marvel's *X-Men* have at last been given the full *Tekken* makeover necessary to challenge the Namco beat-'em-up hegemony. Developed by Britsoft boids Syrox, *X-Men* will be the full polygonal



monty, with a dynamic 3D camera, fluid animation plus a planned 50 or more special moves. A RPG-alike Story Mode is promised, featuring Marvel-animated FMV scenes, but with such scrap-happy characters as Magneto, Iceman, Storm and Wolverine (the man who makes Batman look like a ladyblouse), it's *X-Men*'s comic-book carnage that will ultimately appeal. Round One... FIGHT!

■ **Watch out for:** A Time Ripple option, where you can conjure up your future self for special move mayhem.

17



PLAYSTATION

Jackie Chan's Stuntmaster

■ Developer: Extreme Studios ■ Publisher: SCEA
■ Release date: Spring

And tonight on *Fists In Their Eyes*, you are Jackie Chan!

■ **What is it?** Produced in close association with the Chanster himself, Extreme's platform/adventure/béat-



GAME OVER

gamer, the graphics are cute (Chan looks like a poised Pillsbury Dough Boy), the gameplay very entertaining (the use of any innovative behaviour is always rewarded) and the whole thing makes a refreshing change from the overly bloodsplattered likes of *Tenchi* and *Bushido Blade*.

■ **Why should I care?** It's Jackie bloody Chan, dammit!

■ **Watch out for:** The bilious hued Chan-endorsed Reeboks that the lil' fella leaps around in.

CHOICEST TUNES

Rhythm action games: it's not exactly a flood, but they're coming...



PLAYSTATION

18

Beatmania

■ Developer: Konami
■ Publisher: Konami
■ Release date: March

DJ cut 'n' mix for beginners – or Parappa for grown-ups? Perhaps it's a bit of both.

■ **What is it?** Following in the same mad and marvellous footsteps as *Parappa the Rapper* and *Bust-A-Groove*, *Beatmania* requires you to tap out rhythms on your joypad in order to create banging tunes. Tapping correct interpretations of on-screen prompts triggers samples which make up complete tracks in genres that range from hip-hop to house. Get your track wrong and you're punished with a screeching cacophony. The PlayStation version comes with its own special joypad, which houses a mini-turntable for additional freestyle scratching. It's such a bizarre concept, we had to put it in a category all of its own – essentially, *Simon* has come of age.

■ **Why should we care?** It's the game which has had Japanese arcades throbbing in a beat-inspired frenzy. It's initially hilarious and totally enduring. You can pretend you're king of the beats and then find out whether you really live up to the reputation.

■ **Watch out for:** A two-player option for furious DJ jousting.



CRAFTEST PLOTS

Games that should intrigue your brain as much as tax your trigger finger...



PLAYSTATION

19

Final Fantasy VIII

■ Developer Squaresoft
■ Publisher TBA
■ Release date Winter

The sequel to the greatest RPG of all time readies itself for a Japanese roll-out, with the UK launch still a year away...

■ **What is it?** It's the king of RPGs, the crown prince of real-time active battle systems and an entire royal family of characters, spells, magic and fierce combat, boasting what Square claims are the most powerful baddies ever devised for a videogame. It is, in short, the sequel to *Final Fantasy VII*, the one-time highest-grossing PlayStation game and all-time classic RPG.

It's goodbye to familiar characters Cloud, Tifa, Barret and the gang, and hello Squall Leonheart and his buddies Seifer, Rinoa and Zell. All are students at The Garden, a highly prestigious military academy, and all are hoping to prove their worth and join See-D, the army's premier fighting division. What this comes down to is more of that familiar *Final Fantasy* mix of exploration and those random battles that the Japanese love so much. Once more backgrounds are pre-rendered, while all the characters are polygonal blokes drawn on the top.

■ **Why should I care?** *FFVII* was an absolutely incredible landmark of a game, and *VIII* promises to improve on it in all

areas, in particular with the look of the thing. Everything appears slightly more real here than in its predecessor – especially the characters (something that's caused more than a slight stink with hardcore fans in Japan). They'll be moving around in front of more realistic backdrops too, giving – the early scenes at any rate – the look of '50s Austria (only with added radar dishes and a fleet of attack hydrofoils).

■ **Watch out for:** The new, simplified battle commands. That said,



the fighting system in *FFVIII* will be instantly familiar to disciples of *VII*, with your characters able to attack when their time bar is full, giving combat a curious mixture of turn-based and real-time feel. The big change is in that the fiddly Materia-system (loved by experts; hated by everyone else) is no more, with Magic points being your only source of those stunning attacks. Your characters will be able to steal power from a foe, then use it to finance their own magic-intensive assault.

It's the king of RPGs, the crown prince of real-time active battle

20



■ Watch what you're doing with that stick!

DREAMCAST

Climax Landers

■ Developer Climax
■ Publisher TBA
■ Release date Winter

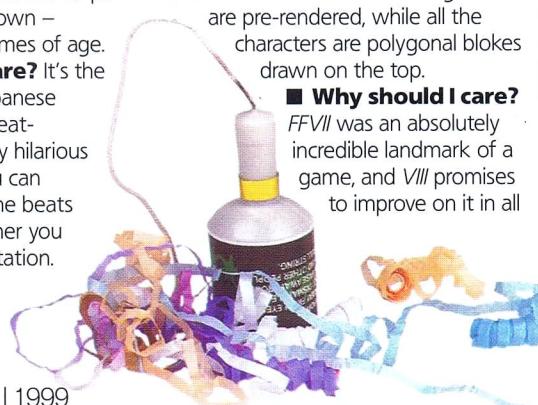
Gorgeous and intricate Japanese RPG's don't get much more gorgeous or intricate than this.

■ **What is it?** One of the most keenly-awaited Dreamcast titles, this RPG

You could, in fact, call *Climax Landers* the world's first existential RPG.

■ **Why should we care?** Apart from the originality of the brilliant storyline and the meticulous characterisation, the game world's evolving yet intangible nature will actually affect the gameplay, with auto-generation of scenery meaning that no area you visit will ever be the same twice. There are certain idiosyncratic elements of *Climax Landers* which may be viewed as "too Japanese" by more conservative UK publishers, but let's hope not. This game could well be set to make as big an impact as the *Final Fantasy* series.

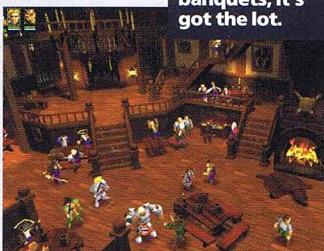
■ **Watch out for:** Who knows? In fact, who are you? Who am I? Why are we here? What are we doing?



features a whole host of personalities from Sword, the brave adventurer hero, to Rao, a man-lion hybrid and Marlin, a female elf-wizard. The goal of the game is rather ephemeral and mysterious (something along the lines of why-are-we-here?) and may only really become clear after much exploration and gathering of knowledge within the thing's strange and ever-changing world.



■ Dragons, banquets, it's got the lot.



PLAYSTATION PC

21 Silver

■ Developer: Infogrames
■ Publisher: Infogrames
■ Release date: February

Your job is to free the world from wizardly tyranny in this heavy-on-the-myth-and-mystery French RPG.

■ **What is it?** It's a role-playing extravaganza that's packed with 3D characters, played out in a glorious pre-rendered world. You live under the pointy jackboot of the evil wizard Silver and, as David (a knight with a useful armoury of magical powers), seem to be just the chap to depose this dictatorial spellcaster. Cue a quest to obtain eight magic orbs, and interact with an ever-growing cast of supporting characters who'll give you all the assistance you need.

■ **Why should I care?** If you liked *Final Fantasy VII*, you'll probably go a bundle on this one too. It's got exploration, role-playing, magic, and a whole load of fighting as well – the full set. You can go hand-to-hand or kit yourself out with a variety of heavy-duty weapons – your choice – and if you need that extra edge you can nab a potion to boost your powers or cripple your enemy. In our book it's better than *FFVII*'s combat system, any day.

■ **Watch out for:** The very best Doctor Who of them all (depending on your age). Tom Baker is one of ten actors to lend his vocal talents to *Silver*.



PC

22 Anachronox

■ Developer: Ion Storm
■ Publisher: Eidos Interactive
■ Release date: Spring

Tear across the galaxy in this character-packed monster-fest.

■ **What is it?** Just your average romp across the galaxy, hunting down lost alien technology and mysterious beings

■ Old "Sly" Boots.

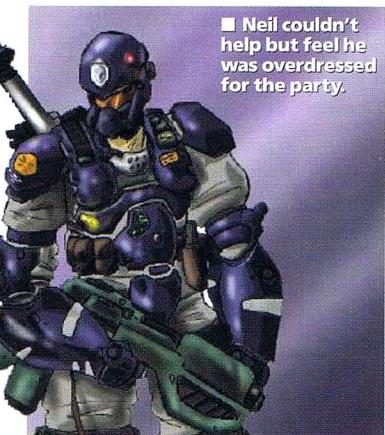
hellbent on destroying the universe.

■ **Why should I care?** It's a mixture of storytelling and role-playing, using the best 3D technology known to man (yep, the familiar old *Quake II* engine, again but with added effects, courtesy of the pixel magicians at Ion Storm). There are almost 500

characters to meet and interact with, over 150 monsters to engage in battle and a team of eight player characters to choose between, led by big-coat-wearing Sylvester "Sly" Boots. Crazy name, crazy guy.

■ Watch out for: DIY guns!

Anachronox features a modular weapons system that enables you to build your own – making, we're told, for even more satisfying kills.



PC

26 Amen: The Awakening

■ Developer: Cavedog
■ Publisher: GT Interactive
■ Release date: June

First-person shooter fans have prayers answered by white-robed gods at Cavedog.



23 & 24

PLAYSTATION

Samurai Legends

[working title]
■ Developer: Konami
■ Publisher: Konami
■ Release date: April

Sword fighting action adventure with very high innards-on-the-floor count.

■ **What is it?** A beautifully drawn 3D action adventure, set in 17th century Japan. You'll need to master sword fighting techniques and slash your way through enemy clans, gangs of ninjas and flocks of vampire bats. Originally called *Japan*, and then *Shogun Assassin*, *Samurai Legends* is still not the final title – watch this space for updates.

■ **Why should I care?** A choice of two playable characters will provide two very distinct adventures.

■ **Watch out for:** Gore, gore, Japanese mythical history and more gore.



PC

Soulbringer

■ Developer: Gremlin Interactive
■ Publisher: Gremlin Interactive
■ Release date: Autumn

Surprisingly, nothing to do with James Brown.

■ **What is it?** A fantasy-based role-playing game depicted using a full 3D, rotational graphics engine.

■ **Why should I care?** Although it's still at a very early stage, the flexibility of *Soulbringer*'s visuals, and the complex, ever-evolving storyline that's promised, could make this game into a real contender in the forthcoming 3D RPG wars.

The game's world contains hugely detailed towns,



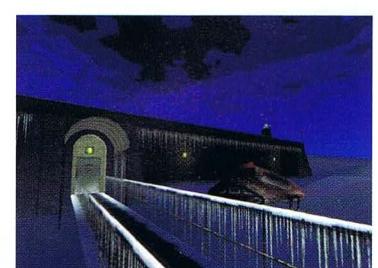
villages, wastelands and forests – all populated by motion-captured non-player characters (NPCs). Movement is polygon-dependent rather than tile-based, making for more sophisticated path-finding, while over 500 inventory items should give it legs.

■ **Watch out for:** Camera angles that alter dynamically – offering the best possible view of the current action.



abilities. A plethora of non-playing characters and monsters will populate the huge levels – every single one of which are randomly generated, meaning no two games should ever be the same. 3D card support is now in the bag too.

■ **Watch out for:** A massive array of spells and combat systems specific to each character class.



PC

25 Diablo 2

■ Developer: Blizzard
■ Publisher: Sierra
■ Release date: Summer

Blizzard's back, this time with a devilish sounding traditional-style RPG.

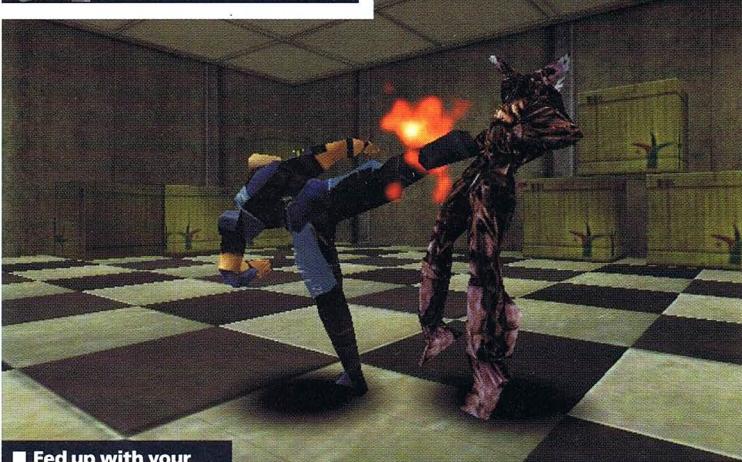
■ **What is it?** An isometric viewed, real-time role-playing game – and the sequel to last year's hugely popular original.

■ Are you lookin' at me?

■ Neil couldn't help but feel he was overdressed for the party.



CRAFTEST PLOTS



■ Fed up with your face? So top yourself and choose another...



PLAYSTATION PC

27 **Omkron**
■ Developer: Quantic Dream ■ Publisher: EIDOS Interactive
■ Release date: Spring

A soul, a soul, a soldier I will be...

■ **What is it?** A 3D adventure game with a hefty helping of action and a sprinkling of theological mumbo-jumbo. To boot: Virtual Reincarnation.

■ **Why should I care?** Because it's integral to the game. In most games you die, then restart where you last

saved. In *Omkron* your soul hangs around until someone comes too close to your dead body, then you can leap in and take over (a bit like in the Denzel Washington film *Fallen*, perhaps). But just in case you get too cocky with the old death thing, the longer your chosen body survives, the better it becomes. It's a bit like the old classic *Paradroid*, really; pick a body that you like the look of, then nab it.

■ **Watch out for:** The free-flowing problem solving. There's no set way to solve any puzzle, so there's no need to get stuck and throw the game away. Just muddle through and you'll get there in the end, even if you die trying.

28



PC

Blade
■ Developer: Rebel Act Studios ■ Publisher: Gremlin Interactive
■ Release date: Summer

It's like a Frank Frazetta painting come to life...

■ **What is it?** A mainly third-person hack-and-slash-fest, enabling you to chose between three sword-and-

■ Swords, sorcery and fantasy breasts: welcome to *Blade*.



sorcery staples – the Conan-like male barbarian, the dwarf or the well-endowed female Amazon.

■ **Why should I care?** *Blade's* visuals are truly next-generation, while a strong exploration element should add an element of depth to the proceedings. Unprecedented real-time lighting effects give the game a highly atmospheric feel, while fine detailing (like convincing reflections in water) and huge draw

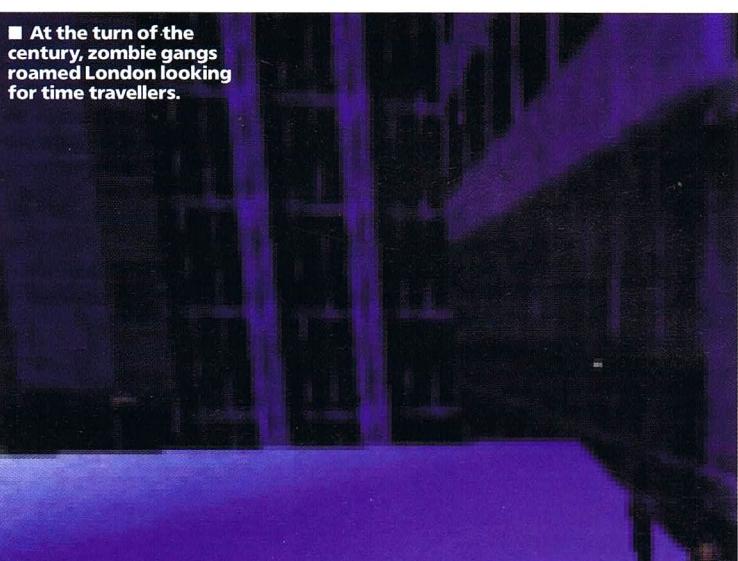
distances should ensure that these environments are some of the most realistic you've yet seen in a PC game.

■ **Watch out for:** Real-time object collision that sees things move according to the laws of real-world physics. Brilliant.

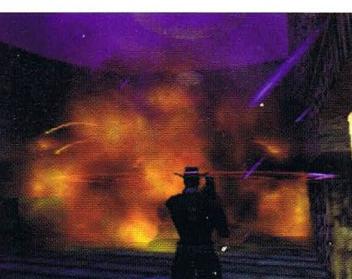
MADDEST SHOOT-OUTS

These games could never be accused of sophistication. But damn, they're satisfying.

■ At the turn of the century, zombie gangs roamed London looking for time travellers.



Over-the-top explosions, gorgeous graphics suited to each time zone and a host of enemies...



NINTENDO 64

29 **Duke Nukem: Zero Hour**
■ Developer: Eurocom
■ Publisher: GT Interactive
■ Release date: Summer

The merchant of bad taste returns, and this time he's brought a new perspective.

■ **What is it?** Pure shooting action, viewed from behind the Dukester and featuring more guns and explosions than an episode of *Baywatch Nights* – and the same degree of realism. Duke needs to travel between different time zones, exterminating aliens who are out to delete him from the history books, and ultimately finish off mankind for good. *Zero Hour* features mission-based

levels and a sniper mode, both now compulsory under *GoldenEye* Law.

■ **Why should I care?** The mission structure should make this rather more enjoyable than your average third-person blaster and better still, having been developed separately from the disappointing PlayStation Duke game *Time to Kill*, *Zero Hour* will take full advantage of the N64 plus 4Mb Expansion Pak combination. Also: over-the-top explosions, gorgeous graphics suited to each time zone and a host of enemies filling up the screen at any one time, including one great stopover in Victorian England where Duke is smothered by zombies. Spook!

■ **Watch out for:** A distinct lack of naked dancing ladies.





The all-new shark-with-halitosis weapon was particularly effective.

NINTENDO 64 PC

30 Daikatana

- Developer: Ion Storm
- Publisher: Eidos Interactive
- Release date: February

It should have appeared a year ago, but John Romero's master work is nearly here (at last).

■ What is it? The long-awaited first-person shooter that *Doom*/*Quake* co-creator John Romero's been working on since co-founding Ion Storm.

■ Why should I care? Romero was the designer behind three of the best PC games of all time, id Software's *Doom*, *Doom II* and *Quake*. *Daikatana*

sounds as ambitious as any of them, and takes place over four distinct timescales: futuristic Japan, ancient Greece, the Dark Ages and modern-day San Francisco. Using a dramatically improved version of the *Quake II* engine, *Daikatana* will feature two sidekick characters who help you throughout the game, as well as over 70 unique monsters – each of which is specific to its own time period. More than 25 weapons should be on offer, as well as the *Daikatana* itself – a cool Japanese sword that elicits the time-travelling aspect of the story line.

■ Watch out for: Romero's well known for favouring *Doom*'s style of large-scale warfare rather than *Quake*'s minimalistic approach. So, expect hordes of creatures attacking simultaneously.



PLAYSTATION

NINTENDO 64

Quake II

- Developer: Raster Productions
- Publisher: Activision
- Release date: TBA

You're sure to have a fraggin' good year with this classic blast.

■ What is it? Oh, come on. The PC original of this gruesome first-person 3D shooter set the precedent for pretty much every successive contestant in the first-person game show. Its claustrophobic dungeons, insane bang-sticks, scary monsters and sleep-

depriving multi-player mode have helped build an international community of dedicated Quakers.

■ Why should I care? Because it's simply one of the world's most enjoyable blood-fests. The PSX and N64 versions are striving to be as similar to their PC dad as possible, but are sneakily slipping in a whole load of improvements, including some exclusive levels, new weapons and split-screen multi-player antics.

■ Watch out for: The gun known as BFG. Big Friendly Giant? Well, let's just say it's not particularly friendly...



PC

Duke Nukem Forever

- Developer: 3D Realms
- Publisher: GT Interactive
- Release date: Spring

Gaming's big, dumb macho-man is back.

■ What is it? The latest *Duke Nukem* blaster, this time using the game engine from *Unreal*.

■ Why should I care? Expect to see the graphical twists that made *Unreal* such a delight, including lens flare and reflective surfaces, married with a fiendish line in weapons and security cameras from *Nukem 3D*. By combining elements from two top games, *Nukem* Forever should play like a dream and bring in interest from double the fan base.

■ Watch out for: The only game character, who's man enough for Lara Croft (at least, we think so).



■ Be afraid. Be very afraid...

PC

Quake Arena

- Developer: id
- Publisher: Activision
- Release date: TBA

The multi-player sequel to one of the (all together now) Biggest Games of All Time.

■ What is it? The traditional *Quake* format – big men in massive dungeons shooting colossal guns, all rendered in splendid first person 3D – but with the single-player "story" mode replaced with multi-player action. Erily, though, the other players are actually highly-intelligent computer-controlled "bots".

■ Why should I care? Multi-player *Quake* is widely regarded as the most addictive, exciting and pleasingly violent gaming experience of the century, and so a sequel that enables you to enjoy this without having either any friends or an Internet connection handy is a certified Good Thing. Coupled with some visual and aural improvements, you'll find it hard to ignore this one.

■ Watch out for: The opportunity to customise your character's death throes.



PLAYSTATION

Point Blank 2

- Developer: Namco
- Publisher: Sony
- Release date: TBC

It'll be just like having a fairground in your very own living room...

■ What is it? Blow the silver trumpets of merriment! The original *Point Blank* was an end-of-the-pier, shooting gallery-style flipside of Namco's other light gun game, *Time Crisis*. This sequel is more of the quite-clearly-crazed same, packing in 70-odd sharp shooting tests, a new adventure mode to blast your way through and "party play", enabling eight turn-taking snipers to crowd round the TV.

■ Why should I care? Because it'll be fun – not something that, *Time Crisis* aside, you can usually level at light gun games. You need to get more use out of that 40-quid G-Con gun after all, and *Point Blank 2*'s dual player mode should provide the ideal opportunity.

■ Watch out for: The eight-player party mode. Your G-Con-equipped front room will never feel like the same place again.



PC

Prey

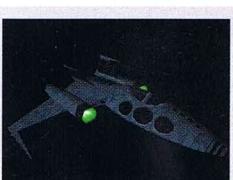
- Developer: 3D Realms
- Publisher: GT Interactive
- Release date: Spring

Once again, the Earth is depending on you.

■ What is it? The newest big thing from 3D Realms, creator of the *Duke Nukem* games. It's an into-the-screen *Quake*-style blaster, and stars Talon Brave (hem hem), a native American who has to take on three different alien species.

■ Why should I care? It's the 3D engine that really makes a first-person blaster, and *Prey*'s game engine promises to be something rather spectacular. If you know your history, you'll know that the engine used for previous *Duke Nukem* games was superseded by the one used in *Unreal*. Well, now *Prey*'s engine is going to supersede that one. This promises to be one helluva big, big game.

■ Watch out for: Something amazing lurking around every corner.



DREAMCAST

Unreal

- Developer: Epic Megagames
- Publisher: GT Interactive
- Release date: Winter

Some say it's the best PC game ever. There wasn't a console capable of containing it – until Dreamcast came along.

■ What is it? Astonishing first-person shooter that, when it appeared for the PC, knocked *Quake* off its perch (for the single-player option at least). Arguably it has only just been bettered by *Half-Life*, and was so intense, you needed to run it on a 400MHz PII to get the best results.

■ Why should I care? If *Unreal* successfully converts to Dreamcast, it will be the first time that we can all experience those hefty shoot-out thrills without kowtowing to Bill Gates.

■ Watch out for: Something amazing lurking around every corner.



DREAMCAST

Incoming

- Developer: Rage
- Publisher: Rage
- Due: Winter

The multi-vehicle blaster comes to Dreamcast.

■ What is it? A shoot-'em-up in the old skool style, combining practically every great shoot-'em-up moment from every great shoot-'em-up ever into one great, blastastic shoot-'em-up amalgam. You name it, you probably get to drive or fly it – tanks, AA-guns, chopper, planes, *Incoming* covers the lot.

■ Why should I care? The PC version was visually stunning and it oozed with playability, bringing the shoot-'em-up out of early retirement, whipping away its bathchair and tartan rug, and shoving it down Ritzys' out on the pull on a Friday night. With the capabilities of Dreamcast, expect things to get even better.

■ Watch out for: Very sore trigger fingers.

35 to 37

BIGGEST SEQUELS

Hang on, haven't I played this before?



NINTENDO 64

38 Perfect Dark

■ Developer: Rare
■ Publisher: Nintendo
■ Release date: September

GoldenEye made creeping down corridors and shooting baddies the most fun ever. Perfect Dark is aiming to go one better.

■ **What is it?** A third-person shoot-'em-up, starring a feisty young lady and an X-Files-style corporate conspiracy. Joanna Dark's mission to uncover the Datadyne Corp's sinister secrets takes her on a series of adventures, from bang-bang shoot-outs to pushing an unconscious alien to safety on a trolley, all done in pure and unadulterated 3D loveliness. A spaceship lying on the sea

floor and the interior of the very scary Datadyne building are just some of the thrills on offer, and look out for the jetbike lying conveniently about on one of the levels, waiting for you to jump on and ride about at stupid speeds.

■ **Why should I care?** The phrases "developed by Rare" and "sequel to *GoldenEye*" should be enough to have saliva dripping copiously from your lips. 007 breathed new life into the shooting genre, heralding the happy marriage of *Doom*-style gunplay and proper puzzle-based missions, wrapping it all up in a delicious, believable environment. And *Perfect Dark* can only be better than this, especially as it'll improve the graphics immeasurably, thanks to the new Nintendo 4Mb Expansion Pak.

But what should really make the game is that the loss of the Bond connection means Rare is now free to

try out a whole host of new gameplay ideas that simply wouldn't have fitted in with the 007 mythology. Expect a ton of new weapons – and opportunities to use them to help solve puzzles, as well as for the more traditional brain-splattering purposes. The enemy AI is also far more complex, as the baddies work in teams and are able to assess the nature of threats before deciding on their course of action.

As well as the traditional one-player shenanigans (with about 20 levels to plough your way through), *Perfect Dark* will also offer the almost obligatory four-player deathmatch scenario, not to mention a much more innovative, co-operative two-player mode.

■ **Watch out for:** A gun that can auto-aim on several enemies at a time, with proper little square targeting boxes and everything. Sweet.



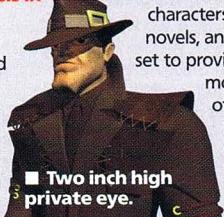
PC

39 & 40 Discworld Noir

■ Developer: Perfect Entertainment
■ Publisher: GT Interactive
■ Release date: Spring

More of Terry Pratchett's comic fantasy novels in playable form.

■ **What is it?** A third game based on the successful *Discworld* novels, written by fantasy's answer to Douglas Adams, Terry Pratchett.



■ **Why should I care?** Gone are the garish 2D graphics and (some of the) rather deliciously immature humour of the first two games, replaced, instead, by a darker, more subtle (though still smile-inducing) 3D adventure with over 70 moody, dimly-lit interiors and multiple camera angles. The interface has been refined to include a new clue-based system. You play Lewton, a take-off on the traditional '40s-style private eye, with high emphasis placed on interaction with other game characters.

Noir is an original story, unlike the first two games which were based on situations and characters from Pratchett's novels, and it looks like it's set to provide some of the moodiest moments of '99.

■ **Watch out for:** 65 characters and 70 locations – it's massive.



PLAYSTATION PC

Grand Theft Auto 2

■ Developer: DMA Design
■ Publisher: Take 2 Interactive
■ Release date: late 1999

Police. Camera. Action!

■ **What is it?** The follow up to last year's tabloid-friendly, drug dealing, joy-ride-'em up. The only thing definitely confirmed about *GTA 2* is that it's coming out in late '99. Unsubstantiated rumours suggest you'll be able to recruit a "crew" and then ride around in a Transit van doing

"jobs" – perhaps an indication that the sequel's going to be set in Sarf London rather than LA, though this is more likely to turn up in a PC-only expansion pack, rather than in *GTA 2* proper.

■ **Why should I care?** The first *GTA* was a true original, overcoming the 16-bit look of its top down visuals with some engrossing gameplay and the sheer immoral joy of turfing law-abiding Americans out of their station wagons. *GTA 2*'s likely to benefit from vastly improved graphics, but we can't help thinking a switch to full, first-person 3D is what's needed to make the sequel something really special. Whatever it looks like though, it's going to be the classic DMA bad taste/two-fingers-at-the-establishment gameplay that brings the thing to crime-ridden life.

■ **Watch out for:** The usual DMA shock-horror tabloid controversy. Deep joy.

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PC

Descent 3

■ Developer: Outrage Software
■ Publisher: Interplay
■ Release date: Spring

Hold on to your hats! Doom (but in a spaceship) is back...

■ **What is it?** The third instalment of the most original first person blaster since *Doom*. This is, for those of you unfamiliar with it, the one where you fly into the belly of a planet, blasting baddies and frantically trying to make head or tail of the 3D map.

■ **Why should I care?** *Descent 3* has been created with a new game engine and will feature real-time transitions from internal to external environments. There are ten new weapons, three new ships, 15 massive, detailed levels and new effects such as wind, rain and fire.

■ **Look out for:** The contents of your stomach putting in an appearance.



DREAMCAST

42 Biohazard: Code Veronica

■ Developer: Capcom
■ Publisher: Capcom
■ Release date: September (TBC)

Oh fear, thy name is (usually) Resident Evil...

■ **What is it?** The Japanese name for the game series westerners know as *Resident Evil*. *Biohazard: Code Veronica*, then, is a special Dreamcast version of Capcom's classic zombie-'em-up. Few details are known at this time, other than that the in-game story deals with Claire Redfield's journey across Europe in order to find her brother Chris (co-star of the first game). It would seem that she succeeds too, as both characters are playable.

■ **Why should I care?** *Resident Evil* games have sold over five million copies worldwide to date – and grabbed praise from game players and designers alike. Indeed, Confounding Factor's Toby Gard, the creator of Lara Croft, told Arcade last month that, "*Resident Evil 2* was my favourite game of the year. I've never been that scared playing a game before." This new version on Dreamcast (the *Biohazard* name will certainly be dropped for the game's UK release) has been labelled by Capcom as "the logical progression from *Resident Evil 2*" – so it should offer all the great gameplay we've come to expect, and more besides.

■ **Watch out for:** Awesome graphics. *Res Evil* is exciting enough on PlayStation, but Sega's new 128-bit machine promises visuals four or five-times more complex than Sony's.

43
to
45

NINTENDO 64

Banjo-Tooie

- Developer: Rare
- Publisher: Nintendo
- Release date: December

The sequel to cute-but-tricky Mario-wannabe, Banjo-Kazooie.

■ **What is it?** A 3D free-roaming platformer, that stars a bear and a bird who spend their days jumping, running, collecting coins and generally acting like some kind of dungareed plumber. At least, that's what we think it's like. Rare's official line is, of course, the utterly predictable, "No comment."

■ Why should I care?

Despite *Banjo-Kazooie* drawing criticism from people who thought it aped *Mario 64* perhaps a little too closely, Rare's original was inventive and playable enough to be compared favourably with *Mario*'s exploits – some thought it even surpassed them, graphically at least. The sequel will (probably) be more of the same, featuring enough of that special Twycross magic to make it a gem.

■ **Watch out for:** The cartridge "opening up" inaccessible sections of the first game. No-one knows how this works...



PLAYSTATION PC

NINTENDO 64

Rayman 2

- Developer: Ubisoft
- Publisher: Ubisoft
- Release date: Spring

The limbless hero is back for 3D platforming fun.

■ **What is it?** Another 3D platformer, starring the cute jumpy hero who was last spotted performing in 2D on the PlayStation many moons ago. There's nothing innovative in terms of plot going on here – Rayman needs to leap between platforms, collect butterflies, defeat bosses and save his kidnapped friends.

■ Why should I care?

Visually, it's stunning, with smooth textures and proper (if somewhat kooky) 3D environments. *Rayman* has a host of different moves, all providing scope for plenty of variation in the puzzles, with Ubisoft emphasising speed and reaction time – and so trying to steer clear of churning out just another *Mario* clone. Refreshing.

■ **Watch out for:** The range of vehicles – from boats to rockets – that Rayman can travel in.



NINTENDO 64

Tetris 64

- Developer: Seta
- Publisher: Nintendo
- Release date: TBA

Another Tetris game? You know you want to...

■ **What is it?** Surely *Tetris* needs no introduction? You have some blocks, they are different shapes, you must build them into a solid wall so that complete lines of blocks magically disappear. Otherwise you lose.

Meanwhile, the release of *Magical Tetris Featuring Mickey* for N64 has recently been announced too, and it includes a "revolutionary" new concept that consists of *Tetris* mixed with some piccies of Disney characters.

■ Why should I care?

Tetris 64 comes with a Bio-Sensor Pak which you clip to your ear. It detects your pulse rate and alters the speed and pattern of the game accordingly. It will look silly and the game will only waste more of your valuable time in the way all the other *Tetris* incarnations have done. You will buy it and waste your life on it, nevertheless.

■ **Watch out for:** Some blocks. Of different shapes. Playing across your eyelids as you fall asleep.



NINTENDO 64 PLAYSTATION

46

ISS Pro '99

- Developer: Konami
- Publisher: Konami
- Release date: November

The beautiful game, beautifully presented, beautiful to play.

■ **What is it?** The greatest football series ever returns for a third go. If you've played the astonishing *ISS Pro '98*, you'll understand how the smooth player control, the incisive tactics and the glorious range of goal-scoring opportunities make us eager as anything to see just how Konami thinks it can improve on a masterwork. Obviously, the company's not telling us a thing, but there's a

possibility the game will make use of increased memory capabilities for

the consoles. An option to save the best replays would be smart, as would the addition of rather more individual character traits – things which make playing with the likes of Roberto Carlos or Ravenelli such a laugh. Purists might suggest than punchier crosses and greater opportunity to curve the ball should be added, too.

■ **Why should I care?** Since the first copies of *ISS Pro '98* arrived in the Arcade office, nothing else has distracted us from our work more often. Dammit, we've even found ourselves watching entire matches as if they were the real thing...

■ **Watch out for:** That really great through-pass getting even better.



PLAYSTATION

Gran Turismo 2

- Developer: SCEJ
- Publisher: Sony
- Release date: March (TBC)

The eagerly-awaited follow-up to what is probably the world's most celebrated driving game.

■ **What is it?** The original *Gran Turismo* roared on to the PlayStation highway from out of nowhere, and with barely a glance in its rear view mirror accelerated away, leaving the competition chewing on its dust. It changed all the rules, providing a killer one-two combination of jaw-dropping graphics and ultra-realistic feeling car mechanics – suddenly every previous home console racing game looked like a kid's toy in comparison. One *Arcade* writer knows a friend who bought a new motor based entirely on "road

tests" conducted in front of his TV – it's just that sort of a game. And now it's time for the sequel.

But unfortunately for us, Sony still remains tight-lipped about quite what this much-anticipated follow up will contain. Contradicting rumours abound, with some sources insisting that the next *GT* we see will be more of a version 1.5 than a true sequel, with the real fireworks coming when an all-new *Gran Turismo* arrives with the launch of PlayStation 2. Still, even the more-of-the-same cosmetic update this would mean us getting our hands on this year ain't to be sniffed at.

■ **Why should I care?** Because even an updated version of the original *GT*, with more cars and a few glitches ironed out, is still A Good Thing. However new in terms of its game engine *GT2* turns out to be, word has it that a number of car manufacturers have agreed to Sony putting their wares in the game, including various makers of 4x4s – indeed, Japanese sources indicate that far more of the new game will take place off-road. *Gran Turismo*'s chief programmer has gone on record as saying that he can squeeze 25% more in the way of graphics power out of PlayStation, and we can't wait to see the results.

■ **Watch out for:** The likes of Ferrari and Porsche joining in the fun.



PLAYSTATION

Time Crisis 2

- Developer: Namco
- Publisher: Sony
- Release date: TBC

Wham! Blam! Thank you, 'Nam.'

■ **What is it?** The sequel to Namco's light-gun blazing, screen-shooting coin-op. *Time Crisis 2* keeps the innovative duck pedal (which lets you hide behind scenery) and the tension ratcheting time limit of the original, but brings in two-player blasting.

■ **Why should I care?** Namco brought *Time Crisis* to the PSX with so much style it made you forget you were pointing a plastic gun at your TV and making "peeow" noises. The two-player action's going to be difficult to pull off in the living room (the coin-op uses a dual screen), but the promise of levels taking in a speedboat chase, forest, Italian city and train are more than enough to start trigger fingers twitching.

■ **Watch out for:** Your partner as you cover them.



NINTENDO 64

Super Mario 64 2

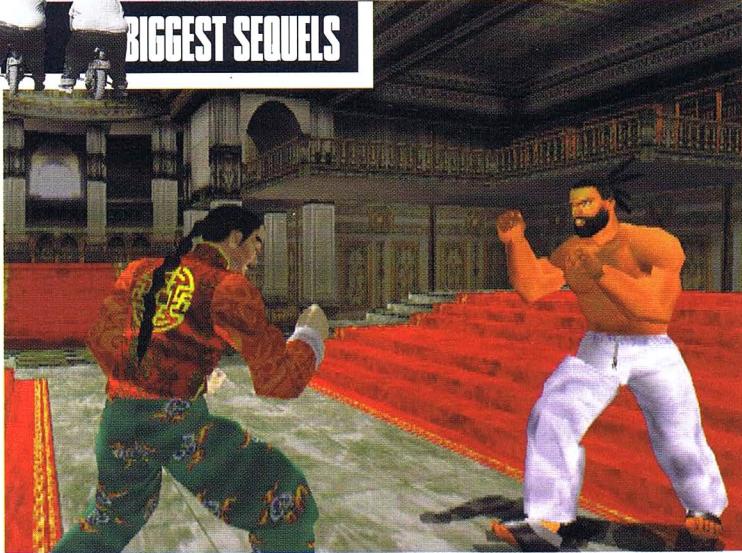
- Developer: Nintendo
- Publisher: Nintendo
- Release date: TBA

The sequel to the title most often described as "the Best Videogame of All Time" is on its way – and Nintendo is just as frustratingly silent about what the game may contain as ever.

■ **What is it?** No one's seen it yet, but you can bet your life it's going to be another 3D platformer, spread across a series of luscious worlds, and with our U-bend friend collecting coins, stars and the



BIGGEST SEQUELS



DREAMCAST

50 Virtua Fighter 3tb

■ Developer: **Sega AM2**
■ Publisher: **Sega**
■ Release date: **September (TBC)**

More pioneering fight action from a world-class outfit.

■ **What is it?** Arguably the best fighting game in the world, that's what. Sega's original *Virtua Fighter* coin-op pioneered 3D gaming, and the series has been pushing back boundaries ever since. Namco's *Tekken* may grab more headlines (because of its PlayStation connections) but few would argue that it's simply following a trail blazed by Sega. *Virtua Fighter 3tb* offers 13 fighters – each with a unique style – and some of the most intricate 3D backgrounds ever devised. The "tb" stands for "team battle" – a game

mode in which two players pick not just one fighter, but a selection. When your first pick is defeated, they are replaced by the next in line. It may not be an original touch (SNK's *King of the Fighters* series has offered this feature for a while) but the option does add a little longevity to what is otherwise a streamlined sit-down, kick-ass, lose, stand-up coin-op experience.

■ **Why should I care?** *Virtua Fighter 2* looked vaguely okay on Saturn, but Sega's doomed 32-bit console never really had the hardware muscle to bring the *Virtua Fighter* series home with any style. Dreamcast, on the other hand, is positively bursting open with graphical muscle, so what we're looking at here is almost certainly going to be a near-perfect conversion of one of the greatest coin-op games of them all.

■ **Watch out for:** Brother versus sister fights (Sarah and Jacky Bryant), as good as you remember them from your own childhood.

Almost certainly a near-perfect conversion of one of the greatest coin-op games of them all



DREAMCAST

Sonic Adventure

■ Developer **Sega Sonic Team**
■ Publisher **Sega**
■ Release date **September**

He's blue. He's fast. You might remember him.

■ **What is it?** Sonic the Hedgehog comes out of retirement to star in

Dreamcast's showcase game. It's the traditional Sonic gameplay (collect the rings, bounce on the bad guys), but this time in 3D.

■ **Why should I care?** This game will make or break Dreamcast.. Yuji Naka (Sega's top programmer) is on the job, and Sega even delayed the game's release in Japan, to make sure that everything was perfect for when it appears.



SCARIEST SCENARIOS

You might just want to keep the lights on when you're playing these...



DREAMCAST

52 Blue Stinger

■ Developer: **Climax Graphics**
■ Publisher: **Sega**
■ Release date: **Winter**

Interactive, graphically superb 3D adventure, set on post-volcanic isle full of weirdos.

■ **What is it?** Several early Dreamcast games appear to be incorporating the theme of a new millennium into their storylines, as sci-fi future meets the present head-on. In *Blue Stinger*, mutant biological creations rub up against the neon cityscape – and you get to



rescue the population. *Resident Evil* set the trend for this kind of intelligent adventure, but *Blue Stinger* looks to be more than just a repetition of the form; it features four characters who have to interact very closely with each other, whichever one you choose to play.

■ **Why should I care?** Just look at the screenshots. Then imagine how Dreamcast's increased capabilities could be about to expand the adventure game genre. Now start getting excited.

■ **Watch out for:** The ghostly female form of Nefilim, who can apparently mutate into any of the other characters.





NINTENDO 64

Hybrid Heaven

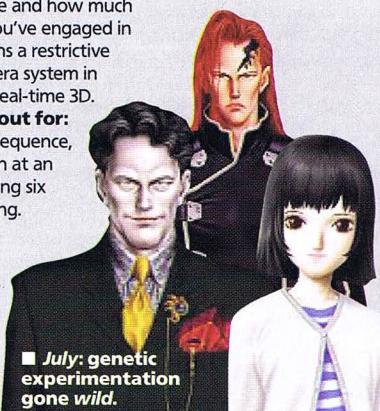
■ Developer: Konami
■ Publisher: Konami
■ Release date: Spring

More Resident Evil-style horror, this time with just a smidge of RPG.

■ **What is it?** A plot that takes in genetic engineering and a kidnapped American President, and gameplay that sees a young man engaged in (appropriately) a hybrid of Tomb Raider-style wandering and RPG-style fighting. All shoe-horned into a sci-fi setting that's sure to please.

■ **Why should I care?** The traditional turn-based combat system has been given a lick of paint, with different attacks varying in strength depending on your stance and how much fighting you've engaged in so far. Shuns a restrictive fixed-camera system in favour of real-time 3D.

■ **Watch out for:** The intro sequence, weighing in at an N64-straining six minutes long.



■ **July:** genetic experimentation gone wild.

DREAMCAST

July

■ Developer: Sega
■ Publisher: Sega
■ Release date: Autumn

An apocalyptic 3D adventure with genetic experimentation.

■ **What is it?** A new strain of the human race has inexplicably evolved with special powers instead of the more usual reproductive organs. Inevitably, a mad scientist starts messing with biology in order to take over the world (ha, ha, ha, ha!), while you play the pairing of Yoshua and Makota (switching between the two throughout the game) in an attempt to stop him. Expect a mixture of stealth, shootouts and intriguing (if rather far-fetched) storyline.

■ **Why should I care?** Because it's another game with an intriguing plot, not to mention a whole bunch of sinister surprises.

■ **Watch out for:** The bleak post-industrial landscapes.



NINTENDO 64

Castlevania 64

■ Developer: Konami
■ Publisher: Konami
■ Release date: Spring

Smack vampire types to kingdom come.

■ **What is it?** The long-awaited 3D update of the Castlevania series, a family of games that's been knocking about for a good ten years. The familiar old running/jumping/fighting style is still there, along with a variety of hideous undead creatures, just begging to be punched.

■ **Why should I care?** There's a host of very neat touches, such as how your chosen character and the time of day affect which puzzles and baddies you'll encounter. The gameplay promises to moisten your pants regularly with plenty of zombie and vampire types cropping up all over the place, sometimes when least expected. The old-skool Castlevania games are shining examples of how to do platforming properly, and Konami always treats its ageing 2D heroes with the necessary respect when dragging them into 3D (cf., *Mystical Ninja*).

■ **Watch out for:** More Ray Harryhausen Jason and the Argonauts-style skeleton scrapping.

■ **There really could be anything lurking in the shadows.**



PLAYSTATION

57

Silent Hill

■ Developer: Konami
■ Publisher: Konami
■ Release date: Spring

Terror has earned itself yet another a new name...

■ **What is it?** The game most likely to send Jack Frost's icy fingers of fear running down your spine this side of the next *Resident Evil*. *Silent Hill* uses *Evil*'s expect-the-worst camera angles and shock-horror moments, making your search for your daughter through fog and darkness-cloaked levels by torch light with only fayed, skinned infant enemies for company. Superb cut-scenes unfold the plot as you move

between the real world and a dream-like other state, with lashings of gore and psychological terror taking it in turns to make for a truly chilling and absorbing experience.

■ **Why should I care?** Because this could – quite simply – prove to be the scariest game ever. The dingy locations are made from polygons rather than *Res Evil*'s pre-rendered backdrops, making for a faster paced fear-ride with a disturbing feel that's all its own. As with any game that's looking to scare the bejesus out of you, these sort of comparisons with *Res Evil* are inevitable, but if this is a clone it's a scary genetic mistake staggering towards you without any skin on, not some shameless, watered down copy.

■ **Watch out for:** Truly terrifying things that lurk in the fog...

PLAYSTATION PC

NINTENDO 64

ShadowMan

■ Publisher: Acclaim
■ Developer: Iguana UK
■ Release date: May

Voodoo-tinged spin-off starring a close comic-book buddy of existing Acclaim star Turok.

■ **What is it?** Fully endorsed by the forces of evil, this third-person, voodoo-inspired action adventure is as dark as a goth's bedroom walls, but much, much scarier than a *Fields of the Nephilim* poster. Following in *Turok*'s size tens, it's another game based around a Valiant comic book character, this one putting you in control of Mike Leroi, an assassin for hire who transforms into voodoo warrior "the ShadowMan" when crossing between the game's two domains, Liveside and Deadside.

■ **Why should I care?** The great interaction between the worlds of living and dead, and the varying abilities



of your alter egos in each, makes for strong character development as you follow a twisting, marrow-chilling plot that takes in Elvis-impersonating serial killers, voodoo symbolism and a mile-high citadel of terror called the Asylum. Expect the game's darker nature to become apparent as you progress, and ShadowMan's voodoo powers increase to awesome looking levels. Superficially, its behind-character view is most like *Tomb Raider*, but the emphasis on psychological horror means you're much less likely to get a peaceful night's sleep after a late night session.

■ **Watch out for:** Ritualistic nookie with Nettie the voodoo priestess.

DREAMCAST COIN-OP

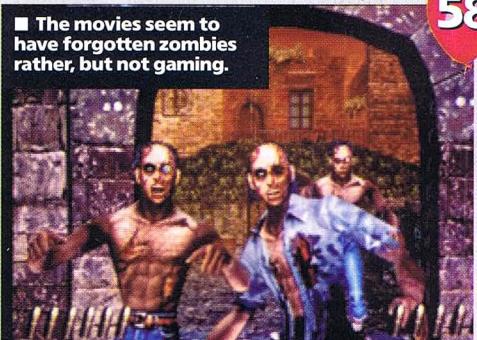
House of the Dead 2

■ Developer: Sega AM1
■ Publisher: Sega
■ Release date: TBC

Ever fancied punching your fist through a damp lump of rotting zombie brain tissue?

■ **What is it?** Triumphant return of Sega's cool claret-spilling, zombie slaughtering lightgun shooter. The same have-large-automatic-weapon, will-spray-lead-at-the-dead-hordes theme is strong in this Dreamcast-bound sequel and, not surprisingly for one of the first games to showcase Sega's new Naomi arcade hardware, it's looking flesh-dissolving lovely. There's also a spin off game that crosses Sega's really rather superb roaming beat-'em-

■ **The movies seem to have forgotten zombies rather, but not gaming.**



up SpikeOut with a *Res Evil*-like undead cast of thousands called *Blood Bullet: House of the Dead Side Story*. Rather than a straight forward gun game, it'll involve laying into zombies with a mixture of fists, feet and pick-upable weapons.

■ **Why should I care?** The original was like *Resident Evil* played down the barrel of the gun, and this new version is likely to have you removing the "un" from the undead with trigger-finger-scuffing persistence. The great zombie beat-'em-up concept of *Blood Bullet* appeals too.

■ **Watch out for:** Some of the most hideous-looking zombies to ever drag themselves moaning from an earthy grave.



■ **Oil of Ulay had no effect.**

58

ODDEST ADVENTURES

Where playing is like living inside some madman's hallucinatory fever-dream...



PLAYSTATION

59 Gex III: Deep Cover Gecko

- Developer: Crystal Dynamics
- Publisher: EIDOS Interactive
- Release date: Summer

Crystal's lounge lizard scales new special agent heights.

■ **What is it?** Armed with a surreal voice-over by ageing lothario Leslie Phillips, last year's Gex 3D boasted epic camera angles, buckets of depth and a wry sense of parody as it embraced all movie clichés known to man or lizard. This time out, Gex is poised to take on/ the piss out of the spy-movie genre. Early previews show more of the same; Gex crawling around a set littered with



■ Special Agent Gex contemplates Pussy Galore.

puns – a case of “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”, presumably. Marliece Andrade (*Baywatch*’s Skylar Bergman and also *Playboy*’s Miss March 1998) will donate her sun-kissed tones to the scaly yet smooth voicebox of Gex’s freshly appointed partner, Special Agent Xtra. The mind boggles. And boggles again.

■ **Why should I care?** Because last year’s Gex outing was the business.

■ **Watch out for:** More Bond and *Mission: Impossible* gags than you can shake a scaly salamander at.



NINTENDO 64

60 Super Mario RPG II

- Developer: HAL
- Publisher: Nintendo
- Release date: TBA

Traditional role-playing game featuring the dungareed platform pipe-meister.

■ **What is it?** The excellent SNES original was never seen in the UK, but this sequel looks as though it may be on its way. Trek across picturesque 3D landscapes, speak to characters who’ve been borrowed from all the old Mario and Yoshi titles, collect objects, solve puzzles and all that RPG stuff. Interestingly, the characters exist as 2D “cut-outs”, which flip over



when they turn around. A very unusual effect indeed.

■ **Why should I care?** Some quarters have voiced concerns about the simplistic look of the game, and it’s actually being touted as a release for “amateur gamesplayers and children” by Shigeru Miyamoto, the game’s producer. But this is far from enough to put us off. Coming from our friends at Nintendo and HAL, we reckon this Mario will turn out to be another fine example to the rest of gaming. And as the first Mario RPG to arrive in Britain, it should definitely be worth a look.

■ **Watch out for:** That dog from the *Yoshi* games, putting in yet another little cameo appearance.



NINTENDO 64

61 Donkey Kong World [Working Title]

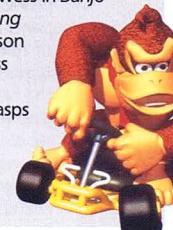
- Developer: Rare
- Publisher: Nintendo
- Release date: December

Long-awaited follow-up to the extremely popular Super Nintendo DK series.

■ **What is it?** You decide. Rare isn’t telling anyone even the slightest detail about this one. It’ll star *Donkey Kong*. It’s a 3D platformer. But please don’t quote us on that.

■ **Why should I care?** Well, basically, because it’s from Rare, a company with one simple rule: to make sure that the games it releases are never, ever worth less than five red stars. The SNES and NES originals pioneered 32-bit-quality rendered graphics on their 8 and 16-bit platforms, and with Rare having already shown off its N64 prowess in *Banjo-Kazooie* and *Diddy Kong Racing*, we see no reason to expect anything less than a world beater.

■ **Watch out for:** Gasps of excitement when Rare’s traditional veil of secrecy is finally lifted from the game.



PLAYSTATION

62 Tail Concerto

- Developer: Bandai
- Publisher: Bandai
- Release date: Summer

Cute but cool adventure, which we hope to see over from Japan.

■ **What is it?** You play Waffle the police dog, and it’s your task to round up a large number of miscreant cats at large on the floating islands of Preree. No really, bear with us on this one. *Tail Concerto* may be cut with intensely cute animated scenes (just a little too Japanese for our tastes), but the game itself is great fun, with a mature sense of humour to be found ‘neath the childish sheen. Waffle himself is trussed up in a huge robotic costume which enables you to scoop up the mincing kitties and hurl them into the nearest wall. You can also lob barrels and crates at them, with amusing effect. As the game progresses, more ingenious ways of wiping out the feline population will have to be uncovered.

■ **Why should I care?** This is actually set to become one of the best action-adventures around, with an air of craziness about it that will outlive the appeal of many a gorefest. If you’re a *Spyro* devotee, *Tail Concerto* will be your bag of Winatot.

■ **Watch out for:** The menacing high-pitched chuckle of your feline foes – just before a crate lands on their fury heads.

63 & 64



DREAMCAST PC

Drakan

- Developer: Surreal Software
- Publisher: Psygnosis
- Release date: January

Puff the Magic Dragon... got utterly toasted by Drakan’s fire-breathing monstrosity.

■ **What is it?** Imagine *Tomb Raider*, but a version where Lara gets to ride on a dragon. A big, scary dragon, with fire-breathing abilities backed up by a selection of dangerous spells.

■ **Why should I care?** It’s a very tasty melding of two different 3D styles. Not only do you get to fly around on



PLAYSTATION

Kingsley

- Developer: Psygnosis
- Publisher: Psygnosis
- Release date: April

Nintendo-style cute can be very hard to do if your name ain’t Shigeru Miyamoto.

■ **What is it?** A mixture of platform and puzzling with the titular purple-clad fox as its hero. Your task, by all accounts, is to save the Fruit Kingdom from the evil wizard Bad Custard.

■ **Why should I care?** Maybe you shouldn’t – this is a kid’s game, albeit one designed with some adult enjoyment also in mind. Certainly, from what we’ve seen, character dialogue written in a knowingly exaggerated faux-medieval style could prove fun.

■ **Watch out for:** Every single thing carrying a food-related, punning name.

65
to
67**PLAYSTATION****Beavis & Butt-head Do Hollywood**

■ Developer: Illusions
■ Publisher: GT Interactive
■ Release date: February

Huh-huh. Huh-huh-huh.
You said 3D polygon mapping. Huh-huh-huh.

■ **What is it?** Adventure, starring America's dumbest teenagers. Why they've chosen 1999 to release it – as no new episodes have been made for at least a year and the film on which the game is loosely based passed by ages ago – is anyone's guess. But at least it should remind *South Park* fans of who came up with the idea of foul-mouthed, badly-drawn, hilarious cartoon comedy first.

■ **Why should I care?** We're not too sure how the 3D game will work, but it seems that apparently our hapless heroes are stranded in Hollywood and must first complete a number of odd tasks in order to earn cash for the flight home. The ability to control each of the characters' speech looks like a winner, butt-munch.

■ **Watch out for:** Walking cacti and Beavis becoming the great Cornholio.

**PLAYSTATION PC****NINTENDO 64****Earthworm Jim 3D**

■ Developer: VIS Interactive
■ Publisher: Interplay
■ Release date: Spring 1999

He's pink, wiggly and the least glamourous game hero of all.

■ **What is it?** The 3D incarnation of the platform game that features a worm dressed in a space suit. And it gets weird.

■ **Why should I care?** For the first time, Jim has total freedom of movement within a game, thus vastly reducing the linear feel that featured in the first two games. New characters such as the Bovine Special Elite (mad goat-toting cows), Rabid (a manic scooter-riding rabbit) and the Disco Zombies, rub shoulder with old favourites like Psycrow, Evil the Cat and Professor Monkey-For-A-Head. The game is bizarrely set inside Jim's brain, and divided into four worlds and 30 levels, each devoted to an area of Jim's personality.

■ **Look out for:** High-octane pocket rocket rides and pig-slide subgames.

**NINTENDO 64****Mystical Ninja 2**

■ Developer: Konami
■ Publisher: Konami
■ Release date: Summer

The mad, blue-haired boy and his fat friend return to our screens.

■ **What is it?** After the RPG styling of the 1998 original, 1999's version sees a return to the rather more '80s platforming roots of *Ganbare Goemon*. In other words, take traditional running and jumping, and mix it up with some mad subgames and a two-player co-operative mode.

■ **Why should I care?** As the UK was denied the more outlandish early instalments in the *Mystical Ninja* series, this will be a great chance to catch up. Without having to waste lumps of processor power or memory on polygons, Konami will be free to slip in even more of the brilliantly bizarre touches that defined *Mystical Ninja 2*'s prequels, and make the game as fast and pretty as the company desires.

■ **Watch out for:** The porky, nappy-wearing Ebisumara. Based on a Japanese deity, you know.

NEWEST ICONS

The new guys in town you just can't avoid...

**PC DREAMCAST (TBC)****Galleon**

■ Developer: Confounding Factor
■ Publisher: Interplay
■ Release date: Christmas

While the pretenders mess about with Lara-alikes, madam la Croft's creators move on...

from the people who created Lara, gaming's biggest human star. If anyone can make you care about a bunch of polygons negotiating through perilous, conundrum-filled landscapes, it's these two. Rhma's going to endear himself with incredibly detailed animation that includes a range of facial expressions – could he do for female gamers what Lara's managed for the fellas? In the meantime a more complete supporting cast than Lara has ever boasted will conduct itself in fluid, lifelike fashion. The developers are promising a more sophisticated user interface than Lara too, with intuitive controls making stumbling off sheer cliff faces a good deal less likely. Combat also looks like being far in advance of *Tomb Raider*'s uninvolved auto-aiming, with a *Zelda* 64-style lock-on feature, enabling you to circle enemies and make attacks without the camera having a fit. And although it's still at a very early stage, screenshots of *Galleon* already exude a mysterious atmosphere that promises to give this whole piracy thing a darkly serious feel, several nautical miles from *Monkey Island*'s messing about.

■ **Watch out for:** The "gorgeous" Rhma – and even more cutlass-waving skeleton foes straight out of *Jason and the Argonauts*.

**NINTENDO 64****Jet Force Gemini**

■ Developer: Rare
■ Publisher: Nintendo
■ Release date: March

A boy, a girl and a dog go crazy. With big weapons.

■ **What is it?** As previewed in the last issue of *Arcade*, *Jet Force Gemini* takes the big cartoony fun and loud colours of *Banjo-Kazooie* and then goes wild down at Bazookas-R-U. Basically, Juno and Vela (and Luples the dog) have travelled to a hostile galaxy in order to bring down Mizar, the megalomaniac tyrant. Plot, however, is largely irrelevant, as all you need to

know is that to complete each level, you'll have to blast everything straight into the next universe.

You can play each character, and you'll have to switch between the three in order to progress. A dog might not seem like much use in a shootout, but we're informed Luples boasts a range of other impressive talents.

■ **Why should I care?** *Jet Force Gemini* is developed by Rare, and if you're still not sure quite what that signifies, you need to reread last issue's "State of Play" feature. Despite the looks, this ain't a game aimed at kids only – as its mischievous sense of humour should indicate.

■ **Watch out for:** The promise of a multi-player deathmatch mode à la *GoldenEye 007*.

NINTENDO 64**Twelve Tales: Conker 64**

■ Developer: Rare
■ Publisher: Rare
■ Release date: Autumn

Rodent adventures, courtesy of a chipmunk and a squirrel.

■ **What is it?** One of those three-dimensional platformers that are all the rage. The stars this time are

Conker (a rather young male squirrel) and Berri (a similarly young female chipmunk), both of whom need to collect some housewarming gifts and rescue their friends. Bless.

■ **Why should I care?** There's an innovative mood system, where the little animals sense their current situation and adapt their facial features accordingly. It has a four-player squirrel-combat mode. It's as vibrant and colourful as an episode

of *Teletubbies*. And, yes, it's from Rare, a company that's capable of churning out more first-rate games in a year than most developers manage in a lifetime.

■ **Watch out for:** Puke-inducing rodent grins.



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NEWEST ICONS



PC

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Max Payne

- Developer: Remedy
- Publisher: Take 2 Interactive
- Release date: September

One day a real rain will come...

■ What is it? A gorgeous-looking 3D third-person adventure shooter, which enhances the growing links between film and videogame media by providing a strong noirish plot. Then there's Max himself, a smooth-dressing, tough-talking, morally ambiguous undercover cop with a nice line in illegal weaponry. His habitat is New York's underworld during the worst winter in a century, and with a storyline full of corruption and betrayal, almost everyone is a potential enemy. Which makes for a

great deal of shooting – a satisfying experience as the expulsion of smoke and flame from Max's most favoured weaponry looks fantastic. US ratings chiefs have already been alerted to Max Payne's uncompromising depiction of violence and death – a sure-fire sign of an enjoyably nasty game.

■ Why should I care? Whereas a great many games exist in a world of medieval fantasy or futuristic fluff, Max Payne tries its hand at something much harder to pull off – a realistic real-world environment. It boasts a perfect mix of brain and trigger-finger-orientated action, all of the scenery is beautifully realised and Max himself is set to become one of the videogame faces of 1999. We even detect a subtle strain of black humour underlying the whole thing. Roll on September.

■ Watch out for: 80-or-so comic book screens that flesh out the story.

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PLAYSTATION PC

Beneath

- Developer: Presto Studios
- Publisher: Activision
- Release date: Spring

An adventurous journey to the centre of the earth...

■ What is it? A Tomb Raider-style third-person perspective explore-and-fight romp set (you got it) in the bowels of the Earth. Our hero is one Jack Wells, rugged adventurer of 1906 vintage, on a mission to explore a lost underground civilisation recently revealed by an Arctic archeological dig. The game promises the usual mix of platform leaping, intense combat and environmentally-based puzzle solving, but it's Jack himself – and his grappling hook weapons which he uses with Indy-whip deftness, that promises to be the star.

■ Why should I care? Beneath features 12 levels spread over three worlds, each one set progressively deeper beneath the Earth's surface – and the further down you go, the more technologically advanced the lost civilisation becomes. An early level might therefore feature Stone Age technology, while later levels would progress to more elaborate mechanical areas, ending up at the mysterious Insectoid regions.

■ Watch out for: Earthquakes, rock slides, elevators, mine carts and tunnelling machines.

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DREAMCAST

D2

- Developer: Warp
- Publisher: Sega (TBC)
- Release date: September (TBC)

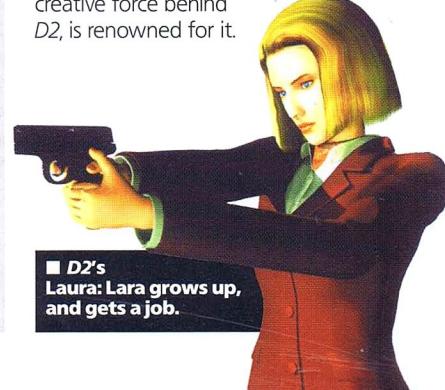
And introducing Dreamcast's answer to Lara Croft...

■ What is it? Back in 1997, D2 was announced as a potential launch game for Matsushita's ill-fated M2 console. When the game machine failed to materialise it seemed that D2 was lost with it. But no. Warp was merely waiting for a system to come along that would be powerful enough to run the game. Enter Dreamcast...

■ Why should I care? Though this is nominally the sequel to million-selling adventure game D, in terms of looks it has a lot more in common with Tomb Raider. It stars a beautiful icy blonde called Laura – clad in a non-nonsense business suit that's right out of Ally McBeal, but packing everything from shot-guns to flame throwers as she blasts her way past assorted mutated monsters in her 3D action-RPG world. The game kicks off with a plane crash in the snowy Canadian wilds – Laura survives, to wake in a deserted hut, where she immediately comes under attack from a variety of mutants. What's going on? It's her (and your) job to find out.

Assorted weapons and vehicles (including a great snowmobile) are available to you, while neat touches include the realistic fact that as she gets colder, Laura becomes more vulnerable to attack (thus making it perhaps better to stay close to the hut than explore the distant mountains, for instance). If D2 makes as effective use of the Dreamcast technology as the bits we've seen suggest, we could be seeing a new high-water mark for 3D adventures – and the birth of a genuine new videogaming superstar.

■ Watch out for: Great music. The charismatic Kenji Eno, creative force behind D2, is renowned for it.



**D2's
Laura: Lara grows up,
and gets a job.**



PLAYSTATION PC

Urban Chaos

- Developer: Mucky Foot
- Publisher: EIDOS Interactive
- Release date: Summer

EIDOS unleashes yet another potential Lara-killer.

■ What is it? The debut game from an outfit made of largely ex-Bullfrog developers, Urban Chaos is a third-person isometric action adventure that stars (shock!) a hard-as-nails female adventurer. The big difference: this time she's black.

■ Why should I care? Does the name Lara mean anything to you? Urban Chaos has aimed itself firmly at the Tomb Raider audience here, and Mucky Foot might just be the team to pull it off (after all, these guys have everything from Magic Carpet to Theme Park amongst their extensive list of credits). Set in an

urban cityscape, circa now, Urban Chaos is a mission-based affair starring two characters on a mission to prevent predictions made by famed prognosticator Nostradamus from coming true. Objectives range from hostage rescue to all-out carnage – the game's proprietary 3D engine already features some incredible environmental effects, from rain to meticulously animated windswept leaves, while the camera angle you use to view it all can be changed on the fly (including zooming in and out), to enable you to get the very best vantage point. However, the most important factor in terms of its mass-market appeal may well be the presence of its stacked female lead. We'll see.

■ Watch out for: The opportunity to hop in to and use any of the myriad vehicles parked throughout the cities.

PC

Indiana Jones and the Infernal Machine

- Developer: LucasArts
- Publisher: LucasArts
- Release date: Spring

Indy's back, and this time he's in glorious 3D.

■ What is it? An action game in the style of Tomb Raider, viewed from the third person with variable camera angles.

■ Why Should I Care? Indy's last game appearance was in the

superb Fate of Atlantis – a release so well scripted it is rumoured to form the basis of the next film. The plot of Infernal Machine centres on locating scattered pieces of the Aetherium – an interdimensional portal located in the ancient Tower of Babel. Your enemies are not the usual Nazis, but Russians, determined to use the Aetherium to swing the balance of power in their favour. You can be sure that the story line will be just as involving as that of a Hollywood blockbuster.

■ Watch out for: A white-water rapids ride, an off-road jeep chase and a twisty-turny mine cart rollercoaster.



PLAYSTATION PC

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Messiah

■ Developer: Shiny Entertainment
■ Publisher: Interplay
■ Release date: Spring

The most effective baby game since Jack the Nipper...

■ What is it? It's one of the biggest challenges in videogames – come up with brand new (yet satisfying and at least halfway realistic) ways of letting you kill game baddies. Shooting them is, of course, the traditional option. Since Mario, jumping on their heads has also become socially acceptable. But things are a little more complicated in *Messiah*. In it you play a cherub (yes, a winged baby, though with the less-than angelic name of "Bob"), and your preferred method of disposing of your enemies is possession – taking over a baddie's body and using it as your own. Much of the game is therefore mainly spent in a *Doctor Who*-like state of confusion; your constantly changing

forms opening up a whole range of interesting gameplay possibilities. Need to get past a guard? Then take over his body, and make him jump off a ledge to break his legs. Or you could simply make him shoot his friends, or himself. It's this intriguing gameplay aspect that promises to make *Messiah* a 3D run-around with a difference.

■ Why should I care? On the technology side, Shiny is rather chuffed with its new real-time deformation and tessellation technology, implemented for the first time in *Messiah*. In-game characters are created over a basic bone structure, with muscles holding them together and skin stretched over the top – their clothes will even crease and pull tight as the characters move. *Messiah* could – if everything goes right – set a new PlayStation standard in terms of both looks and gameplay. Oddly, this isn't the only possession-oriented game of '99 – it seems to be becoming something of a theme.

■ Look out for: A number of the characters in *Messiah* are, to put it bluntly, whores. The extra possession possibilities there are intriguing...

A new PlayStation standard in terms of both looks and gameplay

PLAYSTATION

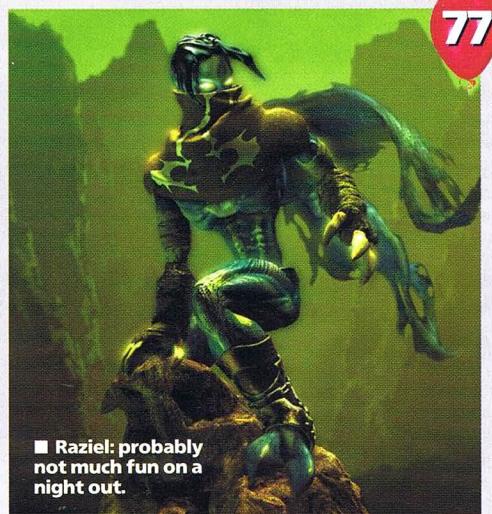
Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver

■ Developer: Crystal Dynamics
■ Publisher: Eidos
■ Release date: March

Purple-clad vampire returns to Nosgoth to reap vengeance. Pale virgins beware.

■ What is it? A vast, intricate and very, very dark follow-up to the *Blood Omen* RPG game from a few years back. As before, you don't play big bad guy Kain but one of his fallen lieutenants, returning to his homeland of Nosgoth and hellbent on some kind of revenge. In the spirit of the times, *Soul Reaver* is now a free-roaming 3D adventure.

■ Why should I care? Your man Raziel is a pretty



Raziel: probably not much fun on a night out.

interesting vampire – he's an expert in hand-to-hand combat, he can easily glide between platforms and he can suck the souls from other vampires, assuming their special powers in the process. Just don't take him

outside before dusk.

■ Watch out for: The ability to switch between the real world and a bizarre spectral realm, essential if you want to be able to complete some of the game's complex puzzles.

STEALTHIEST SNEAKS

1999 will be a big year for gaming's hottest new genre: the sneak-'em-up...

NINTENDO 64

Winback

■ Developer: Omega Force
■ Publisher: Koei
■ Release date: Spring

Koei "borrows" ideas from a PSX stealth-oriented hit-to-be.

■ What is it? A shameless Nintendo-bound rip-off of *Metal Gear Solid*. Viewed from a similar third-person perspective to Konami's wonder, the daftly named

hero – Jean-Luc Cougar, if you must know – is asked to creep through four different areas in an effort to prevent a group of crazies from carrying out their self-defeating threat to explode the Earth.

■ Why should I care? Because you can't get *MGS* on N64, so this may well be the next best thing – especially as *Omega Force* is programming enemies with behaviour patterns that vary from "run-away" to the amusingly fear-free



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"kamikaze". Somewhat surprisingly, a two-player deathmatch is included, though here emphasis is firmly placed on the game's sneaking about aspects.

■ Watch out for: Plenty of bits that are very similar to *Metal Gear Solid*.

PLAYSTATION

Metal Gear Solid

■ Developer: Konami
■ Publisher: Sony
■ Release date: February

The world's first 100% sneak-'em-up.

■ What is it? *Metal Gear* implements the concept that, in some world-saving circumstances, killing every bad guy is not necessarily the route to success. If you employ stealth; hiding behind crates, sneaking behind backs, picking off the odd bad guy with a silencer attached to your pistol and then climbing inside a cardboard box, running around and stopping anytime anyone looked at you, you'd have far more success. Such is the nature of *Metal Gear Solid*.



■ Why should I care?

There's been a strange aura surrounding *Metal Gear Solid*. It's been out in Japan and America for ages. Here in the UK, however, we are being made to wait until February for an official release. We reviewed the Japanese version last issue (where we got hooked on the gameplay, but confused by the plot) but have since been playing the American model and have, for one of the first

times ever in a game, been properly scared. The storyline is so convincing that the whole scenario soon becomes utterly compelling – completing the missions is no longer a matter of personal pride but one of national security, and the game is so chock-full of good bits that you'll love it more every second you spend with it.

■ Look out for: The cool cardboard box and the security cameras on Level Two.

PLAYSTATION

Syphon Filter

■ Developer: 989 Studios
■ Publisher: Sony
■ Release date: TBC

Some sneak-'em-ups are heavy on the sneaking, but this one brings gunplay to the fore.

■ What is it? Another example of *Metal Gear*'s sly yet all-pervading influence on much that's due for release in '99, *Syphon Filter* looks very much like an American take on Konami's masterpiece. You creep



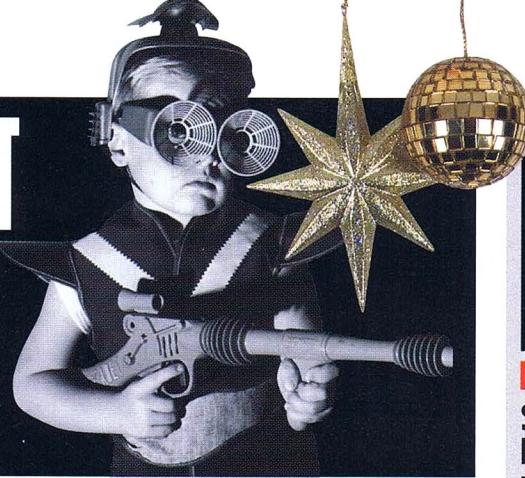
80

around as black-suited counter terrorist agent Gabe Logan, viewed from a third person perspective. But where this differs from *MGS* is that, when the urge takes you, there's an option to let rip with your entire arsenal without fear of the blood-freezing alarms – and subsequent inevitable Game Over message – you get in *Metal Gear*.

■ Why should I care? Because it's only got a side order of stealth, this is going to appeal to those heretics who prefer their James Bond-influenced action to contain rather more of the manly, head-

BEEFIEST BLASTS

Fancy killing a little something? Walk right this way, sir...



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■ Y-wings: crappiest in the Rebel fleet.

PC

Star Wars: X-wing Alliance

■ Developer: LucasArts
■ Publisher: Activision
■ Release date: Summer

LucasArts pilfers what we'd all assumed to be the next X-COM subtitle for itself. (Beats The Phantom Menace, anyway.)

■ **What is it?** A Star Wars-flavoured space combat sim – and the latest in the X-wing series.

■ **Why should I care?** Plenty of

reasons, not least because of LucasArts' phenomenal pedigree. Almost every Star Wars game to date has been top-notch (in part, at least), and although last year's X-wing Vs TIE Fighter offered little in the way of an absorbing single-player experience, Alliance looks set to rectify that.

Perhaps most excitingly for fans of the series, this is the game that will finally give you the chance to pilot Han Solo's Millennium Falcon, as well as an entire alphabet of A, B, X and Y-wings.

■ **Watch out for:** The opportunity to destroy the Death Star using the Millennium Falcon – straight out of Return of the Jedi.

PLAYSTATION PC

Star Trek: Klingon Academy

■ Developer: Spectrum HoloByte
■ Publisher: Interplay
■ Release date: Spring

The first Star Trek game where you get to play the bad guys.

■ **What is it?** Very nearly categorised under "Ugliest Enemies", until someone pointed out that because you play the Klingons, the enemies are actually the Federation crew. You're under the command of General Chang, the greatest living warrior in the Klingon Empire, with 30 large-scale warships at your disposal,



and loads of asteroid fields, black holes, ion storms and nebulae to navigate. Typical battles consist of large-scale engagements, including entire fleets of capital-sized ships from six distinct races familiar to Trek fans. A mission builder is included in Klingon to enable you to,

effectively, play an infinite number of missions.

■ **Why should I care?** Playing as Klingons should give Star Trek a new twist.

■ **Watch out for:** The ludicrous warrior posturing that, in the real world, would render the Klingons a hopeless fighting race.



PLAYSTATION

Space Invaders

■ Developer: Z-Axis
■ Publisher: Activision
■ Release date: Autumn

Activision packs its satchel and returns to the old skool.

■ **What is it?** The almost inevitable 3D makeover of the Taito classic. ■ **Why should I care?** Released about a zillion years ago (1978, actually), Space Invaders was the first videogame responsible for emptying the pockets of our nation's youth. Twenty years on, and with an eye to the current retrogaming vogue, Activision (also responsible for the similarly "all-improved" Asteroids, reviewed on page 113) has bought the licence and entrusted the San Mateo-based developer Z-Axis with giving Space Invaders a polygonal spring clean. A wise choice? Given that Z-Axis' previous claims to fame include the odd Yank sports sim and Take 2's blocky footy game Three Lions, the future's not too promising. Still, judgement must be reserved – if Z-Axis can make good on its early promise to keep the original gameplay, we could be in for a real treat.

■ **Watch out for:** Fuck-off great robo-crabs that start off slow and make duh-duh noises. Obviously.



NINTENDO 64 PC

Wild Metal Country

■ Developer: DMA Design
■ Publisher: Gremlin
■ Interactive ■ Release date: February

We've seen tank sims before, but never anything like this...

■ **What is it?** A tank game. But a tank game from Lemmings and GTA developer DMA, which means it should be very good indeed, considering the Scottish code house's tradition of off-the-wall, near-the-knuckle invention.

The set-up certainly sounds bizarre enough to be DMA's – apparently it's tanks with characteristics based around snakes, bulls, birds and ducks; magnetic mine weapons that drag opponents to an explosive doom and (huh?) giant fans that let you hover over the battlefield. Not exactly a WWII sim, then?

■ **Why should I care?** Because it's by DMA, of course – a team who can always deliver the gameplay goods, with a side order of extra crazed comedy when required. The game engine looks pretty impressive too, allowing for vast playing environments.

■ **Watch out for:** Jumping Jacks – a bizarro weapon that looks set to make Mario Kart's red shells look like a sensible, logical choice.



PLAYSTATION PC

Eliminator

■ Developer: Magenta
■ Publisher: Psygnosis
■ Release date: February

Just your traditional arcade-style 3D space blaster – with a time-bomb taped to your ass.

■ **What is it?** Check your brain at the door when you climb on to this marvellous, mindless caper. Eliminator doesn't really bother with varied missions; each level simply requires you to blast your way out of danger. With one complication: your futuristic ship's most unwanted passenger is a time-bomb, set to render you and yours spacedust if you don't defeat every enemy before the clock runs down. Various power-ups scattered around the battle arenas grant you extra time and improved weaponry. This is gloriously brainless stuff.

■ **Why should I care?** Because there'll always be room for real pick-up-and-play titles, especially ones with graphics this classy.

■ **Watch out for:** The really monster craft that you can upgrade to after early success.

PLAYSTATION

R-Type Delta

■ Developer: Irem
■ Publisher: TBA
■ Release date: TBA

Another "Best Game In the World!" candidate just got better. Or did it?

■ **What is it?** Rather than let 2D space shooter R-Type rest in the Videogame Hall of Fame, Irem has decided to launch it into a late-90s universe of 3D polygons. Expect a similar deluge of bullets and baddies to before, and nasty Godzillized flying robofish. The break from tradition comes with the fact that R-Type Delta's 3Dness means they'll now be able move in and out of the screen, thus negating the strafing tactics that worked so well in the original. Tightened

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control and mad landscapes are promised – along with the sublime add-on Force weapon that so defined the original.

■ **Why should I care?**

We're all on tenterhooks waiting to see whether Irem has genuinely managed to improve things,

or made a hopeless sow's ear out of an undisputed silk purse.

■ **Watch out for:** Virgin Interactive to follow last year's R-Types compilation and release this re-jig in the UK.





LONGEST NIGHTS

You'll just get to the end of this level and capture this town and... oh hell, it's morning!



The record-breaking fingernail was a source of pride in the village.



PC

Shogun: Total War

■ Developer: The Creative Assembly ■ Publisher: Electronic Arts ■ Release date: Spring

Kill your enemies. But with honour.

■ What is it? A 3D real-time strategy offering that puts you in charge of a Japanese army.

■ Why should I care? It promises to be an immersive title, enabling you to take complete control of more than simply combat. As an Eastern warlord, you'll preside over every aspect of day-to-day life. The extremely powerful 3D engine will enable you to zoom in and out and rotate the landscape in a way reminiscent of *Myth*, while the combat strategies on offer are apparently all authentic to the period – 5,000 BC.

■ Watch out for: The heady thrill of controlling literally thousands of lightly-armed troops in pitched battle.

PC

Black and White

■ Developer: Lionhead
■ Publisher: Electronic Arts
■ Release date: Spring

The epic first release from *Populous* and *Dungeon Keeper* creator Peter Molyneux's new Lionhead Studios.

■ What is it? Black and White promises to be a real cross-breed, but one that gains strength and health through its mixture of genes, including elements of management, strategy, god sims (the Molyneux speciality) and

even virtual pets. You play a powerful sorcerer king in an idyllic world; your job is to impress your power on the natives and then get them to worship you. The more you are worshipped, the more powerful you become. All sorts of odd spells make an appearance – spells that vary depending on the nature of the tribe that's worshipping you. If you treat your people fairly, the game world and its inhabitants move from a neutral state towards goodness and beauty; treat them harshly, and all things will become bleak and dark. And who's trying to stop you? Other sorcerers – all of them intent on gaining more power.

■ Why should I care? The never-before-seen spell casting system in

B&W promises to be influential for years to come – they're cast via a new Gesture Recognition system, enabling you to call them up by using specific mouse moves that mimic the joypad combos of a beat-'em-up. You might cast a fire spell by sweeping the mouse around in a circle, for example – but make it a crap circle, and your spell won't be very powerful. By eliminating a sea of icons, it is hoped that this will make the potentially complex *Black and White* highly accessible.

■ Watch out for: The assorted people and animals you can capture, train and grow to giant size to do your bidding – their looks turn noble or ugly, depending on how you treat them.

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89
to
90



PC

Cutthroats

■ Developer: Hothouse Creations
■ Publisher: EIDOS Interactive
■ Release date: Spring

Heave-ho, me hearties. Pieces of eight. Yes, it's a pirate strategy game.

■ What is it? You might expect a pirate game to be pitched, at least in part, as a comedy, but no, EIDOS is apparently playing it straight. That means this is being valiantly marketed as a serious war/trading strategy game, set in the Caribbean between the years 1625 and 1725. Fastidious attention to historical detail means that although the aim is to make ruthless raids on ships and ports, you'll still need to pay attention to economic models in order to make sure you're nicking valuable booty not junk.

■ Why should I care? Because you can have fun with an essentially weighty strategy game not afraid to send itself up with mischievous undertones. And isn't controlling a whole bunch of unpredictable, backstabbing renegades always going to have it over a dull, disciplined army?

■ Watch out for: More piratical games to follow if this and *Galleon* are successful.

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Command & Conquer 2: Tiberian Sun

■ Developer: Westwood Studios ■ Publisher: Electronic Arts ■ Release date: February

Total Annihilation is a thorn in Westwood's side. With *Tiberian Sun*, it could be gouged out.

■ What is it? The "true" sequel to the original C&C – the most important, most groundbreaking real-time strategy game of all time.

■ Why should I care? Westwood is generally credited with near single-handedly establishing real-time strategy as a major game genre – first with C&C, and then with *Red Alert*. *Tiberian Sun* uses the same overhead viewpoint and point-and-click control system, and retains the basic gameplay. Elements of resource management, base construction and weapon upgrades all return,

therefore, although in more sophisticated forms.

The terrain is now 3D, meaning units located on raised land have a distinct advantage over others below them, while bridges, hover units and assorted upgradeable structures make their debuts, too. Although not featuring a full 3D engine like that in Bungie's *Myth*, Westwood claims *Tiberian Sun* will retain the stupidly addictive multi-player action that made the C&C name, as well as including enough new features to make it stand out from its rivals. Voxel (3D pixels) are being used to create much more detailed unit models, while the infantry animations will also benefit from advanced motion-capture techniques. This type of real-time strategy is Westwood's bag, and *Tiberian Sun* will, without doubt, be one of the biggest games of '99.

■ Watch out for: The fact that the dreaded "tank rush" has apparently been dealt with forever.

PC

Tanktics

■ Developer: DMA Design
■ Publisher: Gremlin
■ Release date: February

People are coming to get you with tanks. Best build your own, then.

■ What is it? A bizarre 3D strategy game in which you control the Part-O-Matic – a huge, hovering crane with which you build armies of tanks from spare parts.

Throughout the four time periods of the game (stone age, medieval, modern and future) you fight motiveless battles with other tanks.

■ Why should I care? DMA (also offering us *Wild Metal Country* in '99 – the team must have tanks on the brain) is renowned for its sly sense of humour, meaning *Tanktics* is unlikely to succumb to the po-faced malaise which affects so many other strategy games.

■ Watch out for: Lethal tanks that don't really look anything like tanks.



Mel: never good with mascara.

PC

Braveheart

■ Developer: Red Lemon
■ Publisher: EIDOS Interactive
■ Release date: Spring

Do what the SNP dreams of – seize power in Scotland.

■ What is it? A 3D strategy version of the famous Mel Gibson movie (though throughout its development *Braveheart* was known as *Tartan Army*, the film tie-in arriving relatively late in the day). EIDOS reckons this version will be more historically convincing than its free-with-the-truth cinematic brother, though – visually at least – the two are dead ringers. As things kick off, the clans of a far-from-united Scotland are in a state of virtual anarchy, fighting amongst themselves. Your task as a William Wallace-alike is to conquer or forge alliances with your rivals, before pushing the Sassenachs back over Hadrian's wall – not an easy task, especially considering the battles you have to run against such enemies as inclement weather and the ropey economic infrastructure of 12th century Scotland.

■ Why should I care? Scots developer Red Lemon claims to have reproduced the exact terrain of the whole country using satellite mapping. It's this kind of obsessive attention to detail that suggests that this could be one of the best strategy games yet made.

■ Watch out for: Sequences from the movie cut near seamlessly into the game.



LONGEST NIGHTS



NINTENDO 64

Starcraft 64

- Developer: Blizzard
- Publisher: Nintendo
- Release date: TBA

The popular futuristic real-time strategy title comes to N64.

■ What is it? A point-and-click war simulation, viewed from above and based around an epic space punch-up between three different species. The original PC version featured spaceships, spacetanks and spacetroops.

■ Why should I care? The multi-player mode is to remain intact, and Blizzard is planning new levels, modes and unit types. As Nintendo has secured exclusivity, this will be the definitive console version and, as long as the PC's mouse control can be transcribed, will be an essential for N64 gamers.

■ Watch out for: Amusingly Action Man-like one-liners from your troops.



PC

Age Of Empires II: Age of Kings

- Developer: Ensemble Studios
- Publisher: Microsoft
- Release date: March

Not content with dominating modern civilisation, Bill Gates wants a piece of the past too...

■ What is it? Another sequel. This time, a real-time strategy epic clearly inspired by *Civilization*.

■ Why should I care? The popular *Age of Empires* managed to blend trading and diplomacy with traditional real-time strategy empire-building. With this sequel, Ensemble (under the guidance of *Civ* co-designer Bruce Shelley), promises to expand on each of the predecessor's key features, including the combat and economy systems. Spanning 1,000 years, the same hugely addictive blend of great resource management, research and construction will doubtless be in place.

■ Watch out for: An advanced timeframe and the opportunity to build far more sophisticated structures, including castles and keeps.

UGLIES ENEMIES

They fell out of the ugly tree, and hit every branch on the way down.



PC

Giants: Citizen Kabuto

- Developer: Planet Moon
- Publisher: Interplay
- Release date: Summer

The first game from Planet Moon, a team built from the Shiny Entertainment refugees who brought us MDK.

■ What is it? The BFG gone AWOL; an all-out war of magic, technology and brute savagery between three super-powered teams – the mammoth but solitary Kabuto, the technology-based, space-travelling Meccs and the all-female, sea-faring Reapers. You will



be able to play as any one of these races, on a mission to eat, burn, drown, kidnap or bury your victims to gain control over a serene paradise planet hidden deep inside a beautiful nebula. Battles ensue on a massive fragment of a shattered planet, divided into 40 separate islands, all in glorious 3D.

■ Why should I care? A fourth, completely separate race of inhabitants, whose resources can be tapped where necessary (you can even eat the little guys for nourishment), adds a unique dynamic to the game.

■ Watch out for: Really big, detailed graphics and some great weapons, including the Sea Reapers' incredible tornado, which lifts enemies into the air, before dropping them hundreds of feet to the ground.



DREAMCAST

Jurassic Park: Dungeon Keeper II

- Developer: Bullfrog
- Publisher: EA
- Release date: June

Coin-op conversion for the brilliant dino lightgun shooter.

■ What is it? If you've been into an arcade lately, you will have undoubtedly been tempted by *The Lost World*. Sat in the blacked-out cab, hideous reptilian forms appear to leap right in to your face – until you blast them triumphantly into dust, that is. Yup, many of our hard-earned coins have gone thataway. And the Dreamcast conversion sounds even better, with bigger monsters and levels.

■ Why should I care? It's hours of mindless fun.

■ Watch out for: Slashing claws and gnashing teeth.



PC



than before – and there are plenty of new beasties at your disposal. Everyone's favourite Horned Reaper is back again, along with the much-loved Bile Demon – but a whole host of destructively-minded mutants with distinct characteristics are all new. Additional tweaks to the gameplay mean *DKII* works against tedious defensive-minded players.

■ Watch out for: The Maidens of the Nest – half women, half spider, all hate. And chickens.



PC

Alien Vs Predator

- Developer: Rebellion
- Publisher: Fox Interactive
- Release date: Spring

Two of the least attractive races in the universe meet head-on.

■ What is it? The videogame of the comic of the films. Time for the acid-blooded Freudian nightmares to take on the dreadlocked big-game hunters in a scrap to the death. Assorted hapless humans look on helplessly.

■ Why should I care? The hook with *Alien Vs Predator* – beyond the obvious thrills of such a hellish clash of the titans – is that your style of play will depend on which side you control. Playing as the Aliens, you see the world through fish-eye vision and can streak around at lightning speed up walls, along ceilings and through ventilation ducts. As a Predator, you're eight feet tall, have infrared vision and, of course, a cloaking device. This game offers world-class ugliness, whichever way you look at it.

■ Watch out for: A superb multiplayer deathmatch frenzy.

DREAMCAST

Turok 2

- Developer: Iguana
- Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment
- Release date: Winter

Everyone's favourite screechy reptiles will be even bigger and better on Dreamcast.

■ What is it? Last issue's N64 game of the month will be Acclaim's first release for Dreamcast. You should already know it, but just in case, this is a tremendous first-person shooter involving the most outrageously destructive weapons known to man – and a range of hideous beasts on which to use them.

■ Why should I care? The N64 version of *Turok 2* pushes the machine's memory capabilities to the max (it's the first game to use Nintendo's 4Mb Expansion Pak), but Dreamcast should give the whole thing more room to breathe.

■ Watch out for: The unpleasant effects of the cerebral bore in ever-more horrid graphic detail.



■ He was often teased about his huge feet.



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KICK ASS

BECOME A DEMON GAME PLAYER OVERNIGHT

WELCOME TO KICK ASS

HELL HATH NO FURY

Edited by | Rich Pelley



There was a man outside Marks and Spencer this lunchtime, with a microphone and a small amplifier. He was going on about how we're all going to Hell, for we have all sinned. Hell, apparently, is a place where we will have to perform the most mundane and tedious of tasks *ad infinitum*. There's no escape, for we can all foresee our own personal Hell; we can all envisage a task which we wouldn't wish to do for a nanosecond, let alone for eternity. In Hell, we'll want to claw out our eyes, the man said, and peel the skin from our bones. Anything to distract us from the frustration and boredom.

And this is why you should be grateful to Kick Ass, and to me. Think of the number of hours of your life that could be wasted trying to win Trick Attack on Dragon Fall in 1080°. You'd have to try again, and again, sinking deeper and deeper into your own personal Hell. To save you from this torment, I've selflessly sacrificed days of my life playing 1080° to bring you the solution.

BIGGEST GUIDES TO THE LATEST BIGGEST GAMES, PROVIDED BY AN EXPERT ON THE MATTER

So welcome to this month's Kick Ass. Crash 3's good, isn't it? I'm rubbish at it, of course, but I've managed to see a lot of it over the shoulder of a man in a tracksuit in the next office as I go to make my daily cups of tea.

"Hello," I eventually plucked up courage to say. "My name's Rich. How far have you got on Crash 3?"

"Finished it," he replied.

And so a friendship was born. Arron Taylor (it turns out) has written a mammoth guide to Crash 3, while I've been trying to drum up enough energy to scour the earth for tips and cheats on all the other games around. This is a pattern I imagine to be repeated over the coming months – the biggest guides to the latest biggest games, provided by an expert on the matter, all backed up with pages of smaller, tighter tips, painstakingly drenched up by yours truly.

I'll see you in 12 pages time, then.



COMPLETE PLAYERS GUIDE

KICK ASS AT...

CRASH BANDICOOT

Format: PlayStation | Publisher: Sony | Developer: Naughty Dog | Price: £39.99 | Players: 1 | ★★★★

Smash the box. Now kill the scorpion. But don't forget to hold... too late! To save this (and other unpleasant life-ending incidents) from happening to you, Arcade's tips guru is here with a helping hand. If you're still thinking about buying Crash 3, then head to our full review on page 110 to find out if you should or not. But if you've already got a copy, stick with me here. I'll show you how to become a Crash master.

LEVEL 1 TOAD VILLAGE

Box gem difficulty: **1/10**
The first level is there to help you get used to the game and your moves, and to act as a brief introduction to the style of game. There's nothing difficult here, so try to get both the crystal and the box gem (see the Pick Up Your Valuables box for details, page 98) on your first go. Then go back in and get the relic. The "Box Gem Difficulty" mark is my rough indication of how hard it is to break all the boxes and so get the box gem.

LEVEL 2 UNDER PRESSURE

Box gem difficulty: **4/10**
You're underwater – a first for the Crash trilogy. Press the \otimes button for a short speed burst. The best approach is to ignore all the enemies, and concentrate on surviving. The underwater jetski you get is very useful, as you can use it to fire missiles that break open red plants and reveal the boxes behind. It can also perform a super speed burst, vital when you're doing the time trial.

LEVEL 3 ORIENT EXPRESS

Box gem difficulty: **6/10**
Stretching all the way back to the original Crash is this level's

"leap on the back of an animal and ride it through the level" idea. This time it's an oversized tiger cub – pressing \otimes makes him gallop, essential in getting the relic. Pressing this will also smash through any barrels that are rolled your way. Don't use it when you are going for the box gem, though. The main thing to watch out for are the springboard men; they won't kill you, but they will bounce you up to a higher level – not always a good thing, as it may mean you miss some boxes.

LEVEL 4 BONE YARD

Box gem difficulty: **4/10**
Hot lava and steaming geysers are the main hazards on this level. It starts with the usual into-the-screen action. Break the egg halfway through and you can climb aboard... something. It looks like a baby dinosaur, and boy, can it jump. The dino also provides you with extra protection – acting like a mask – with the added bonus that you can just hop straight back on again and carry on unscathed.

LEVEL 5 MAKING WAVES

Box gem difficulty: **7/10**
Another first for Crash is this jetbike level, very reminiscent of Wave Race 64. It's quite easy to get lost, so keep an eye on the

COMPLETE PLAYERS GUIDE

CRASH BANDICOOT 3

WORLD
1

arrow at the top of the screen, as it shows you the way to go. The main danger on these levels are the floating bombs. Some of them move, and some stay still. Other hazards include the bombs that the ship fires, rowboats and the annoying anchor-wielding men. The box gem may prove tricky, as a couple of boxes are hidden behind ramps, so you could find yourself having to backtrack occasionally.



BOSS



Tiny Tiger

Returning from Crash Bandicoot 2 is Tiny, but this time he's a bit easier. When he starts his mad stomping, keep running around until he plants his trident in the ground and then spin attack him. He will release lions that you can kill with the spin attack, but there is normally another lion following up which will eat you as your spin ends. Just try to avoid them wherever possible.

When Tiny starts jumping around, use the same spin tactic as before. His last attack is simply more lions. Again, avoid if you can, then hit Tiny once more to seal his fate and get your new move.

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GAMES
TIPPED
THIS
MONTH

PLAYSTATION

- P106 COLONY WARS: VENGEANCE
- P107 COOL BOARDERS 3
- P96 CRASH BANDICOOT 3
- P107 MEGAMAN LEGENDS
- P103 METAL GEAR SOLID
- P103 NFL BLITZ
- P106 NHL 99
- P107 ODDWORLD:
ABE'S ODDYSEE
- P107 ROGUE TRIP
- P104 TENCHU
- P106 TEST DRIVE 5
- P106 TIME CRISIS
- P102 TOCA 2

PC

- P107 THE FIFTH ELEMENT
- P105 KLINGON HONOR GUARD
- P108 LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE 2
- P107 ODDWORLD:
ABE'S ODDYSEE
- P107 TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX
- P105 TOTAL ANNIHILATION

NINTENDO 64

- P104 1080°
- P106 BODY HARVEST
- P104 BOMBERMAN HERO
- P106 CRUISE'N WORLD
- P103 FORSAKEN 64
- P103 F-ZERO X
- P103 NFL BLITZ
- P105 WCW VS NWO REVENGE
- P103 WIPEOUT 64

SEGA SATURN

- P107 RADIANT SILVERGUN

ICOOT 3

COMPLETE PLAYERS
GUIDE CRASH BANDICOOT 3 **WORLD 2**

FOR FULL
REVIEW
TURN TO
PAGE 110

LEVEL 1 GEE WIZ

Box gem difficulty: **2/10**
This level introduces the wizard enemy. They're nasty, as they can fire magic spells, which are tricky to avoid. The rest of the level is fairly easy, with the usual frogs, knights and goats to avoid. The box gem is straightforward, too. The only point where you might suffer is right at the end, when you have to hit an "!" box, surrounded by nitro boxes. Make sure you are clear of them all, especially the ones behind you.

LEVEL 2 HANG 'EM HIGH

Box gem difficulty: **3/10**
The first of the Aladdin-esque levels, this has a couple of difficult enemies, the worst of which are the swash-bucklers. They're invulnerable when they start swinging their swords; wait until their backs are turned before giving them the spin treatment. The other enemy is the pot lady. She carries a wobbling tower of pots and, if you spin attack her, one falls over her head and she'll try to ram you off the platform. The best way to kill her is to slide her. This will send her flying off, taking out anything else in her way. You'll also encounter some netting. When you're under it, press and hold Jump to cling on

to it, press @ to spin and press @ to lift your legs. Watch out for the scorpions – they'll kill you if you touch them.

Yellow gem:

The only way to get this gem is through the special warp room, which becomes active once you have acquired five relics. However, to enter Hang 'em High from here will cost you 15 relics, so make sure you are prepared.

LEVEL 3 HOG RIDE

Box gem difficulty: **6/10**
In this level you compete in a motorbike race, but, to get the crystal, you have to win. Follow the other cars, trying to get inside them if you can, and you'll be okay. Watch out for the green zipper pads, as these give you a massive speed burst which continues until you release the accelerator. However, it's hard to steer while pulling a wheelie. (Yes, you can still steer your bike, even though the front wheel is off the ground.) The box gem seems fairly simple, until you find you keep finishing the level with one box short. If you go back, you'll see it hiding behind a ramp.

LEVEL 4 TOMB TIME

Box gem difficulty: **6/10**
In the tomb levels, you have to enter and survive a pyramid, fresh

out of Egypt. The pyramids are full of booby traps and strange enemies, so keep your wits about you. The flame-thrower men are particularly dangerous – time your run well, or you'll be burnt to a crisp. When you step on the stone switches, other platforms pop out for a short time, enabling you to jump on to the moving platforms. These platforms don't vanish, so take your time getting across.

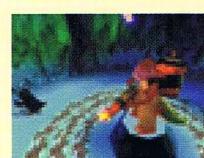
Clear gem:

To get the clear gem, you must already have the purple gem or the purple door will not open. Follow this tricky path, and you'll end up at the clear gem.

LEVEL 5 MIDNIGHT RUN

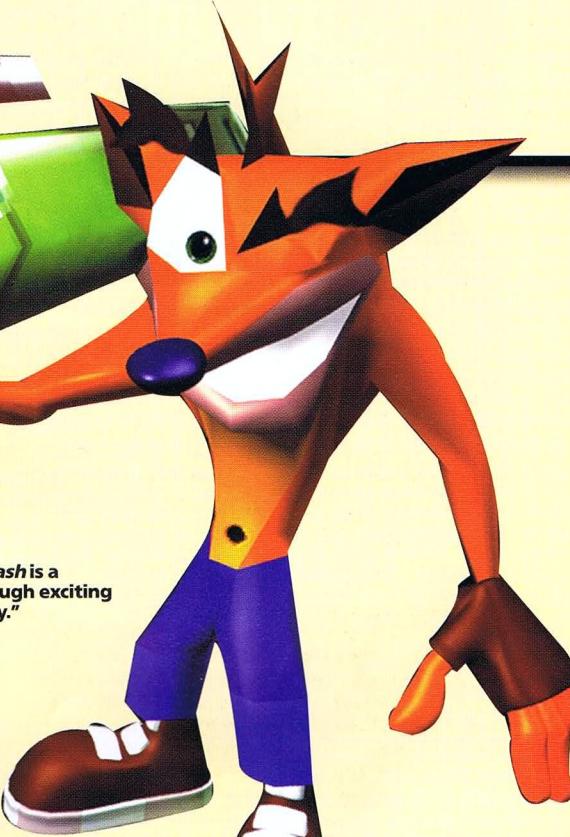
Box gem difficulty: **7/10**
Another riding level, only this time it's at night. You have new enemies to cope with, who make getting the boxes very tricky. The dragons are the worst, as they can move in three different patterns. They are either low, so you have to jump over them, high, so you have to stay low to get under them, or a mix of both; pick your spot carefully if you want to get past them. Remember to gallop whenever you can if you're going for the relic. Be careful, as a careless jump while galloping will smack you into one of the overhead bridges.

BOSS

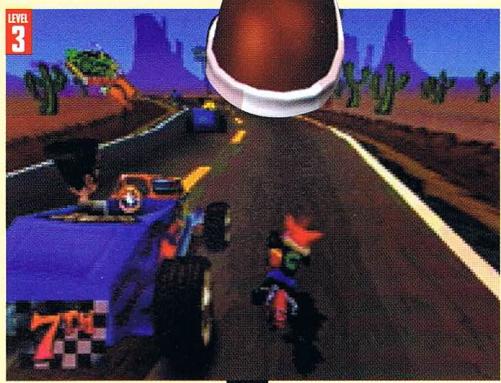


Dingodile

This boss can be very tricky. Avoid the falling fire by standing between the shadows. Now run forward slightly, then turn back. This will make the Dingodile fire his gun at the place where you were. Do this a few times and you should be able to get to him. Go in, spin attack him, then get out before you get trapped. Repeat this twice more and it's all over. Make sure you get out before he blows up, though, or he'll take you with him.



LEVEL 3



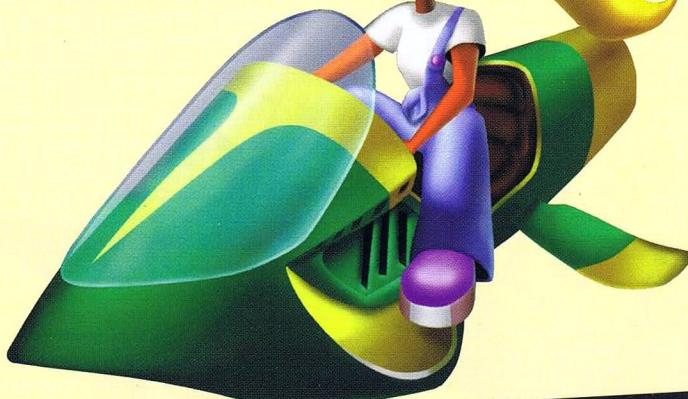
LEVEL 4



CRASH BANDICOOT 3

CONTINUED...

■ Crash is joined by his near-identical sister Cocoa. Except she's got long blonde hair.



COMPLETE PLAYERS GUIDE CRASH BANDICOOT 3

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3

LEVEL 1 DINO MIGHT

■ Box gem difficulty: **5/10**
■ This level is U-shaped – you start by running away from the screen, then it changes to sideways scrolling, and finally sees you legging it into the camera as you're chased by a massive triceratops. The first stage is fairly easy – just remember to time your attack on the Crash seals (you need to wait until they stop spinning before you attack them). Watch out for the steaming geysers and lava flows, as before. Make sure you break open the egg and ride the baby dino again, because even if you get hit, you can hop back on him and carry on. Don't forget to access the secret level once you have the yellow gem.

Clear gem:
To get the clear gem, you must already have the yellow gem. This

will create a platform which takes you to another U-shaped level, culminating in a very difficult "into the screen" chase, at the end of which you'll find the clear gem.

LEVEL 2 DEEP TROUBLE

■ Box gem difficulty: **8/10**
■ Welcome back the sub-aqua world of Crash. There are different enemies for you to negotiate this time, and they're mainly whirlpools. These turn on and off, so make sure you time your dash through them or you'll be sucked in. The underwater jetski is very useful, as it means you can shoot things and (like before) get the boxes hidden behind the red plants. When going for the box gem, don't forget you have to go via the red gem route (see below). The jetski dash is very handy when you're doing the time trial, as it's much faster than your normal speed.

Red gem:

Make your way to the end of the level, and you'll see a "!" box. Hit it, then go all the way back, down the tunnel, until you come to a lot of TNT and metal boxes. The switch you hit has made a TNT box appear. Don't attack it, just touch the top of it, then retreat. It will blow a way through for you. Follow this round and you'll end up at the red gem.

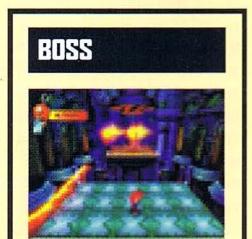
LEVEL 3 HIGH TIME

■ Box gem difficulty: **4/10**
■ Not too different to Hang 'em High when it comes to the enemies, but you do have to do a lot more net hanging. The perspective can make this tricky, but keep concentrating and you should be okay. Don't forget that by holding jump \otimes as you bounce on a trampoline ledge, you'll jump higher. This can prove invaluable later on in this level.

When you are going for the relic you can mix the double-jump and the super spin to fly right round the flames.

Purple gem:

To get to the purple gem, you have to get on the Skull and Crossbones platform. To make this platform solid, you first have to get every other gem, crystal and relic on this world. This path is very tricky, but it does end up at the purple gem.



BOSS



N Tropy

■ N Tropy is very easy to defeat. When you start, he will fire an energy ball at you. Jump it. Then he will try and shoot some lasers at you. Hop over them, then watch to see which tiles are flashing, and get on one that isn't. The flashing tiles will fall away. Now make your way over to him and spin attack him. This time, when he fires the energy balls, the second one will be high, so duck under it. Repeat the attack twice more, and you'll have him. Be warned, though – making your way over to him gets harder as he takes damage.

PICK UP YOUR VALUABLES! Just getting through the levels ain't enough...

■ Each level of Crash 3 has several shiny, necklace-friendly things for you to collect in order to properly finish the game.

1) Crystals

■ There is one crystal in every one of the main 25 levels, and when you get all five crystals from a world the boss level of that world is opened up.

2) Gems

■ There are five main coloured gems (red, blue, green, yellow and purple), all of them very hard to find.

When you do find one it will open up other areas of certain levels.

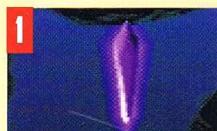
You can also get box and clear gems. You receive a box gem when you break every single box on a level. This includes all TNT and nitro boxes. The number of boxes on a level ranges from around 20, right up to almost 170. Good hunting!

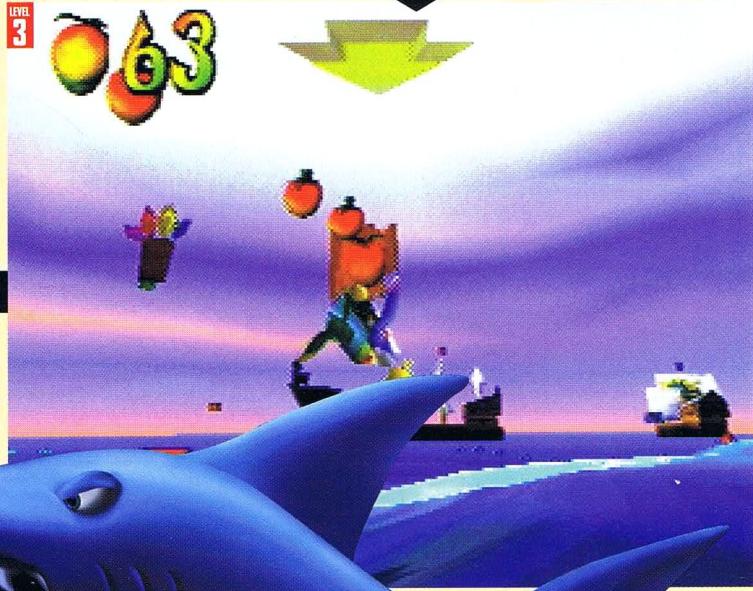
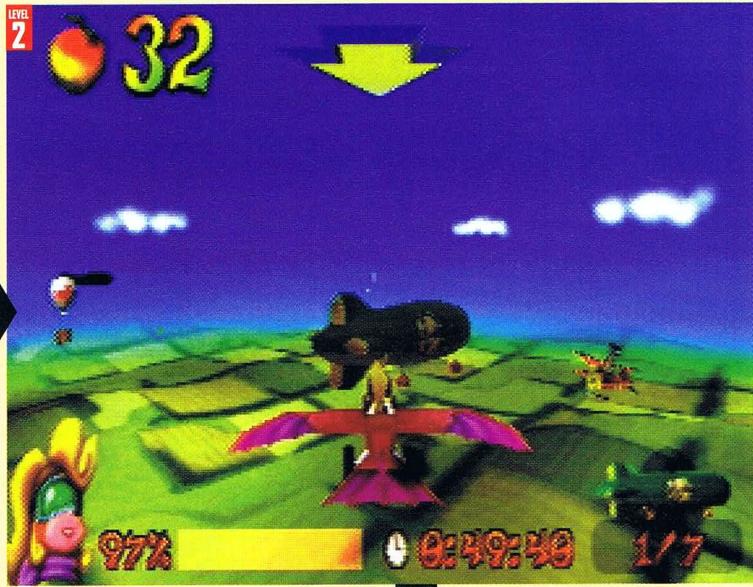
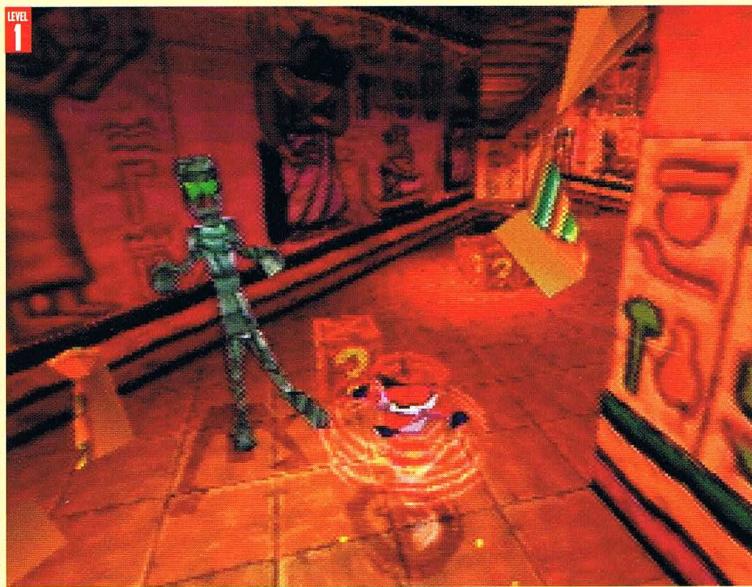
Clear gems are your reward when you fulfil a set task. You may get one by coming first in a race, or by taking a much harder route via a Skull and Crossbones platform. However you earn

them, these gems are pretty tough to get your hands on.

3) Relics

■ A new addition to the Crash saga, you receive relics when you achieve a certain time on a level. Once you've got the crystal from a particular level, you can re-enter that level and try for a relic. The time you need to beat is displayed before you enter. There are three colours of relics: sapphire, gold, and platinum. Obviously, the faster you complete a level, the higher the award you get.





COMPLETE PLAYERS GUIDE CRASH BANDICOOT 3 WORLD 4

LEVEL 1 SPHYNXINATOR

■ Box gem difficulty: **9/10**
■ Another tomb level, and the same advice applies. The most common ways to die on this level are by getting impaled on spikes (which spring up, then retract), or by getting squashed under falling blocks. You can spin through the spikes without damage, but the falling blocks are a lot wider than they look, often squashing you when you thought you were safely past. To get the box gem you have to double-jump over the large gap on the left route, grab the boxes here, then retrace your steps and go up the right side as well. Very tricky.

Clear gem:

You can only get this after you have acquired the blue gem. Hop on the blue platform midway through the level, and it will take you to a different part of the tomb, through a very tricky route, at the end of which you will find the clear gem.

LEVEL 2 BYE BYE BLIMPS

■ Box gem difficulty: **1/10**
■ The first of three free-flight levels, and by far the easiest. All you have to do is to shoot down seven blimps or airships. Keep your finger on the @ for a rapid-firing machine gun, and keep tapping the @ to evade enemy fire. If you get low on health, shoot one of the first-aid balloons, which will cure you.

LEVEL 3 TELL NO TALES

■ Box gem difficulty: **5/10**
■ Another jetski level. Watch out for the pirate ships that fire cannonballs out at you. Try to go right through the middle of them, as this way you don't lose any speed. You may find that you have trouble getting all the boxes, and you will probably have to go through the level again backwards. The reason you can easily miss some boxes is that you have to go around the back

of the last pirate ship – there are five more boxes here.

LEVEL 4 FUTURE FRENZY

■ Box gem difficulty: **8/10**
■ On this level, remember that if you touch anything orange, you'll get zapped. You can kill the little men in flying saucers by jumping directly on top of them, or by using the apple launcher. If you are going for the box gem, make sure you jump over the "!" box in the middle of the level, so you can get the boxes underneath where the metal boxes will form. To kill the ED-209 enemies, dodge their three rockets, then hit into the target on their back.

Clear gem:

The only way to get the clear gem is to take the extra route via the secret warp room.

LEVEL 5 TOMB WADER

■ Box gem difficulty: **6/10**
■ This level is easy if you take

your time. Remember that Crash can't swim, so jump on the platforms when the water level rises, or you'll drown. If you don't think you can make it to the next platform, stop, and wait for the water to rise and sink again. Don't risk anything. This level is much easier once you have the apple launcher, as it enables you to kill the enemies and nitro boxes without getting too close. Watch out for the blocks that slide out, as these can easily push you into a nitro box or ravine.

Blue gem:

To get the blue gem, you have to get every other crystal, gem, and relic available in this world, apart from the ones that need the blue gem. When you have these, the skull and cross bones platform will become solid, taking you to a tough sub-level that leads to the blue gem.

BOSS



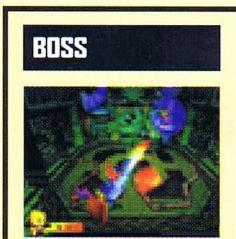
N Gin

■ Crash pilots a flying machine for this boss, and at a press of the @ button the tiger you can ride on comes and helps you, so you can now fire three shots at once. Aim for the flashing yellow parts on N Gin's ship and, after three hits, he will retreat – only to return with more power than any of the other bosses. But he's still easy to kill, as long as you keep moving and shooting the rockets he fires.

■ Captain Fish will be pleased – it looks like we've found another game with fins in.



CRASH BANDICOOT 3 CONTINUED...



COMPLETE PLAYERS GUIDE CRASH BANDICOOT 3 WORLD 5

BOSS



N Cortex

The toughest boss in the game – it will probably take some time before you manage to kill him. First of all, jump the spinning beam while avoiding the fireballs. When Cortex starts chucking mines, make your way over to him and spin attack when his shield is down. Now you have to spin attack him again and again, trying to bounce him down the pit in the middle of the floor. When you do this, he loses a chunk of energy. Now the masks join together and look like they are following you. They're not, however – they're just following a set pattern. Watch it closely, and learn the pattern, again dodging the fireballs that Cortex throws at you. When he's lobbed his mines, spin attack him again and once more try to spin him down the pit. For Cortex's final attack, the masks join together, and then dive at you. Keep moving and jumping, always remembering to avoid the fireballs. As before, when the mines are thrown, spin attack him into the pit, and he'll be destroyed. The apple launcher is now yours.

LEVEL 1 GONE TOMORROW

- Box gem difficulty: **6/10**
- Another futuristic level, only this time it's much harder. Again, remember that if you touch anything orange you'll get zapped. The ED-209 robots are back, and just as hard as ever to kill. As long as you take your time, this level is not actually that bad – it's getting the relics that's going to cause you the problems, as when you start rushing, you can make mistakes, and on this level there's simply no room for errors.

Clear gem:

You must already have the green gem, then jump on the green platform to open up the route to the clear gem.

Getting through it isn't too tough, but getting the relic – especially the gold one – is. Use the double-jump spin method to get any fire blocking your way. There are also some tricky 3D jumps to perform, so make sure you take your time on these, or you'll see yourself right back at the beginning of the level.

Green gem:

You have to use the Skull and Crossbones platform, which again means getting all the other gems, crystals and relics from this world first. Not easy.

LEVEL 2 ORANGE ASPHALT

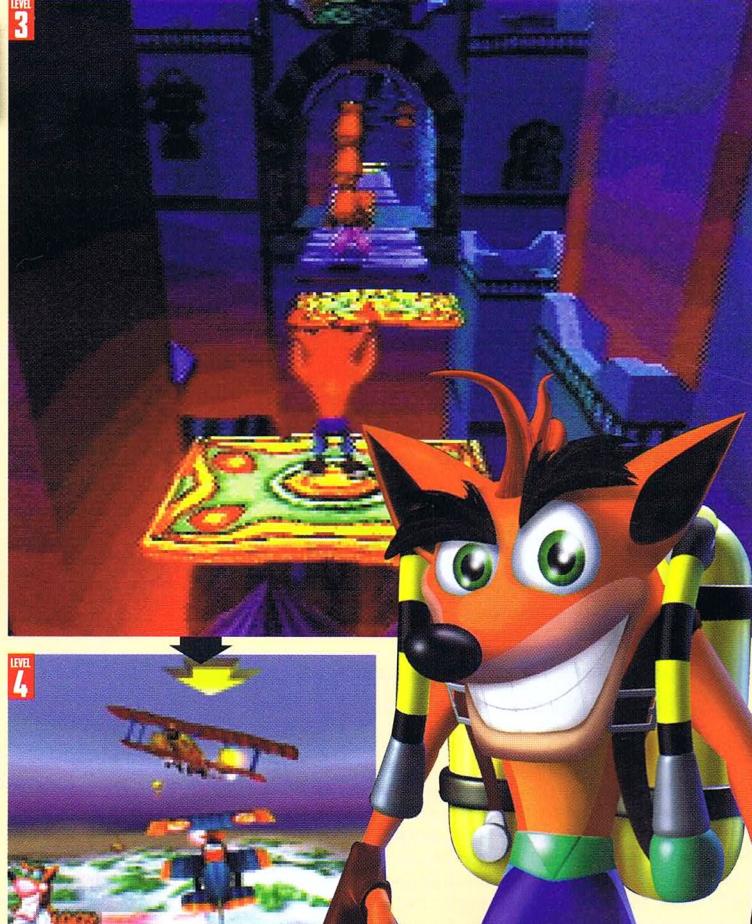
- Box gem difficulty: **7/10**
- Yep, you're back at the races. This time, however, the police cars move across the road, trying to impede your progress. They're quite easily avoided, though – just aim toward the side they're on the second you see them. This level sees you making a lot of jumps over ravines, so make sure you hit the ramp, or you'll get that falling feeling. You can get past ravines by going right to the outside of the track – it'll slow you down, but at least you won't fall in. By this point in the game, the other drivers will have developed terrible driving habits, deliberately trying to bump you down the nearest ravine, so try to keep your distance.

LEVEL 4 MAD BOMBERS

- Box gem difficulty: **2/10**
- Another flying level, and this one is a bit trickier. The main difference is that your target is now a lot smaller and is moving. What you are aiming for are the two engines on each of the enemy bombers. Remember to spin if you are under enemy fire. Use the arrow at the top of the screen as a way-pointer – it shows you the way to the nearest bomber. Getting the gold relic will definitely take you a while, though.

LEVEL 5 BUG LITE

- Box gem difficulty: **7/10**
- The last normal level in the game sees the return of the glow bugs, who made their first appearance in Crash 2. They will stay with you for a while, then go, so make sure you get a new bug whenever you can. Don't grab them as soon as you see them – instead, make sure any doors in your way are open before you pick your bug up. Midway through the level you'll get three masks, making you invulnerable. As you are charging



LEVEL 4



through the nitro boxes, don't forget that you can still die if you fall into any of the ravines.

Clear gem:

To get the clear gem, you have to have all five of the coloured gems. This will take you on a very treacherous route, leading eventually to the clear gem.



COMPLETE PLAYERS GUIDE CRASH BANDICOOT 3 WORLD 6

LEVEL 1 SKI CRAZED

Box gem difficulty: **10/10**
The final jetski level. It looks almost identical to the first secret level, and just as difficult. Finishing the level isn't too tricky, but this is without doubt the hardest level in the game for getting the gold relic – chiefly because there are so many yellow time-off boxes, most of them surrounded by bombs. Make no mistake, you will need all your speed and skill to get the gold relic and get off this level intact.

LEVEL 2 HANG 'EM HIGH

Gems: **yellow**
This isn't a standalone level, merely an add-on to the original Hang 'em High level. It is the only way to get the yellow gem. Remember that there's no rush, so make sure you watch and learn all the patterns of the enemies, so you can time your attacks perfectly.

LEVEL 3 AREA 51

Box gem difficulty: **7/10**
The trickiest racing level by far – not least because this time you're up against some UFOs! Not only this, but the police cars now drive straight for you as oncoming traffic. Add to this the fact that you're now racing at night, with only your headlamp for light, and you can probably see how it swiftly becomes very tough. If you see any barriers, this means that there are ravines right behind, so move over sharpish! Also, the UFOs have a nasty habit of switching from one side of the road to the other for no particular reason. You have been warned!

LEVEL 4 FUTURE FRENZY

Gems: **clear**
Again, similar to Hang 'em High, in that this is just an addition to the main level, Future Frenzy. This route will lead you to the

clear gem, and it's not all that tricky, especially considering it's a clear gem route.

LEVEL 5 RINGS OF POWER

Box gem difficulty: **6/10**
The final free-flight level, although you do have a route you have to follow. Simply fly through all the rings. That's it. As is often the case, winning the race is far too easy, but the hard part comes when you try for the relic (especially the gold relic). The only way you are going to get this is by spinning as you go through each ring. This gives you a massive speed burst, but makes control much more difficult.

Clear gem:
Simply win the race.

WHERE IN THE WORLD? | The top secret levels are hard to find...

As with the other *Crash* games, there are a couple of top-secret levels hidden somewhere within the game. You can access the first via the second motorbike level, Road Crash. Midway through the level you will see a small yellow sign on the left side of the road with an alien painted on it. Simply crash Crash into it and you'll be warped straight there.

The second top-secret level is harder to reach. First, you have to get 15 relics and the yellow gem. Now enter the level Dino Might, on the third world, and jump on the yellow platform. When you reach the "running into the screen" part, run Crash into the second pterodactyl. You'll be carried to the second secret level.

SECRET LEVEL 1



SECRET LEVEL 2



Is that it? Yep, afraid so. You've finished the game. Now roll on *Crash Bandicoot 4...*

TOCA 2

■ There were lots of great things in the last Arcade. Codemasters' favourite thing was the small red box at the top of page 115, next to the review of TOCA 2, saying their baby was Arcade's PlayStation Game of the Month. In fact, it seems that the company was so pleased, it has written us a whole page of TOCA 2 tips especially. Ah, bless.



■ Wind resistance is always going to be a bit of a problem when your spare wheel's stuck to the bonnet. Come to think of it, visibility might suffer too.

All the info you need for TOCA tracks and cars.

The tracks

■ TOCA 2 features an exciting test track, enabling you to give your chosen car some welly on a variety of surfaces. One of the best uses of the test track is to experiment with your car setup, accessed via the pause menu. Once you've done your fiddling, re-enter the track at the point you left it, providing you with a direct and easily accessible comparison.

Some test track options have large elevation changes – this is good for practice when you start taking on tracks like Brands Hatch. Another option includes a dirt track with an extremely slippery surface; this is useful for learning how to control spin-outs.

The cars

■ All the cars included in the game have unique properties. To discover your favourite car, try driving a couple of laps around Donington in each one and see which you prefer. Your

best options are probably the Honda, Renault, Audi or Volvo, as these four have a little more power than the others.

When choosing a support car, it's important to realise that these cars handle differently. You can drive the Fiesta just like the TOCA cars, but it's slower. The Van Diemen needs some attention to prevent oversteer and you should avoid collisions at all costs. The Lister, AC, TVR and Jaguar also need a change in driving style.

While driving the TOCA cars you can leave braking til 75-50 metres and keep on the brakes round the corner; the support cars, however, require you to brake at about 100m (150m for Jag) and finish your de-acceleration before entering the corner. Apply gas gently after hitting the inside apex of most corners, but be sparing (especially in the Lister). There are some good hairpin bends that let the AC, Jag and TVR give plenty of oversteer on the exit, which can be fun.

The Scorpion drives like a more nervous version of the

Van Diemen. All the rear-wheel drive cars need great respect in the wet, especially the AC, as you can't increase downforce. Again, choose a car and play around with it; experimentation is key when you're evaluating a car's performance.

And to conclude...

■ Practice is the name of the game. Don't just bomb around the tracks, take your time and don't get frustrated if you keep losing control.

■ Each track requires its own specific driving technique, and they all need learning. Work out which bends are giving you problems and practice them until you've got 'em right. Don't make a lot of small corrections left and right. Run a clean line wherever possible. Decide which part of the track you're most comfortable overtaking the other cars on, then just be patient and wait for that point before you make your move.

Overall, keep practising, concentrate during the races and never let up (even when you're well in front).



TOCA 2 TEN COMMANDMENTS

1) Thou shalt learn the tracks

■ Practice in single race. To achieve the best lap times, you need to learn each track well.

2) Thou shalt familiarise thyself with the cars

■ All the cars handle a bit differently, so find which ones suit your driving style and get to know them. Renaults and Nissans are good all-rounders.

3) Thou shalt drive well

■ Scoring a good qualifying time is very important to get you through later and harder stages. There is no room to mess up, because you only get one lap. Even when you know you're heading for a good lap time or are well ahead of the pack, don't let up. Keep on the gas and increase your lead by as much as possible.

4) Thou shalt pay attention to thy car

■ Take notice of the way your car is set up – this can have a real influence on how you do on specific tracks. For example, at Thruxton you need to max

your sixth gear, while at Brands Hatch the default gear set-up should work fine.

5) Thou shalt not rush it

■ Use the brakes. Piling into corners at top speed may often result in you spinning out. Keep the car steady along straights, brake down to the cornering speed before you start to turn, turn smoothly into the corner and then accelerate out.

6) Thou shalt race inside

■ If you are approaching a corner in a pack, take the inside racing line and use the other cars to guide you round the corner. TOCA cars are very twitchy; you must learn to take the corners at the appropriate speed. The Time Trial option is specifically designed for this, giving you the opportunity to perfect your corners as you score progressively faster times.

7) Thou shalt work out the short-cuts

■ Some tracks have useful little short-cuts you can use, thus avoiding nasty chicanes and corners.

8) Thou shalt pay attention to the pit crew

■ Some of your pit crew's speech is very informative and useful. This means driving into the pit lane when your team-mate is already there is a waste of valuable time.

9) Thou shalt purchase a steering wheel

■ Analogue acceleration and braking is a big advantage in the wet, especially on support cars. Invest in a steering wheel and pedals – this is how you should play racing games, and it gives you the most realistic playing experience.

10) Thou shalt keep off the grass

■ Stick to the track and take the best racing line – going off track can be very detrimental to your car's performance and handling. Preventing spins is also important. If you feel the car starting to spin, reduce your acceleration and steer back on to the right line. If you end up on the grass, stay in a straight line until you get to the tarmac.

CHANGE THE RULES

■ And now the bit you really want to know; the cheats. Enter the code name as your driver's name, and prepare to experience a different kind of racing.

MINICARS
PADDED
LUNAR
LONGLONG
PUNCHY
BANGBANG
TECHLOCK
BCASTLE
DUBBED
ELASTIC
TRIPPY
JUSTFEET
FASTBOY
DINKYBIT

Micro Machines camera view
Bouncy barriers
Low gravity
Propeller-head championship
No kick-out of champ
Battle mode
Lock frame-rate during qualification
Bouncy crashes
OTT crashes
Stretch track vertically
Blur horizons
Wheels only (no car body)
Faster
Oulton Park island circuit



■ Fancy playing TOCA 2 from a diddy MicroMachines perspective? Or racing with no chassis? Now you can.

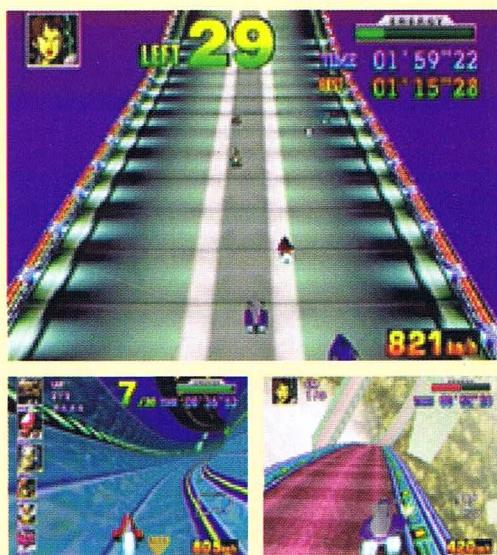
F-ZERO X

F-Zero X is simply the fastest, most adrenaline-fuelled, multi-player "car" extravaganza ever – and one that turns out to be truly rewarding when you put it in the effort to get to grips with the controls and layout of the tracks, thus allowing your natural skills to shine through as you develop your own style of driving.

Right after you make the third hard turn on Mute City II, you will see a ramp to the left that

looks like it will lead you off-track. If you hit it using a booster, you will fly over the gap and take a sneaky shortcut on to the next strip of tracks. You can stop your car spinning while you pick the settings by pressing all four C buttons at the same time.

During any GP race in F-Zero X, press the L button to see how far behind you are from the leader, or how far ahead you are of the second placed vehicle. The time will appear in the upper right-hand corner of the screen.



WIPEOUT 64



What did we reckon to Wipeout 64, then? I've no idea, but I'll just nip over to page 144 and have a look. In the meantime, here's how to pull off a screamingly fast start.

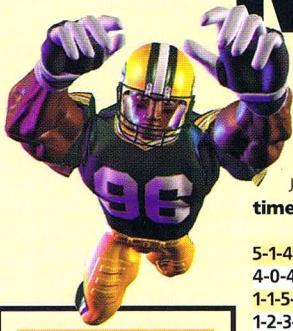
Listen carefully to the "3, 2, 1"

countdown. Just before it gets to "1", give your motor some gas with the A button. The meter will start to rise, but don't worry about this. The meter will rise to about three-quarters full, and you'll turbo boost away from the line at a stunning rate of knots.

PLAYSTATION

NINTENDO 64

NFL BLITZ



American Football, eh? What on god's green earth is that all about?

On the match-up screen enter these codes. The numbers refer to the number of times you have to press Turbo, Jump and Pass. So, for Unlimited Turbo press **Turbo five times, Jump once, Pass four times and then press Up.**

5-1-4-Up	Unlimited Turbo
4-0-4-Left	Speed mode
1-1-5-Left	Random plays
1-2-3-Left	Super FGs (field goals)
0-1-0-Up	Late hits
0-2-1-Right	Show more field
5-3-4-Down	Lights out
0-3-2-Left	Fast Turbo
0-0-1-Down	Show FG%
3-1-4-Down	Computer almost unbeatable
0-4-5-Up	Super Blitz
2-5-0-Left	Bullet passes
2-1-1-Left	Step out of bounds enabled
1-0-2-Right	Hide name
5-5-5-Up	Hyper Blitz
1-1-1-Down	Tournament mode
2-1-0-Up	No first downs
3-4-4-Up	No interceptions
4-2-3-Down	No random fumbles
1-5-1-Up	No punting
5-0-0-Left	No stadium
0-1-2-Down	No CPU assistance
3-2-1-Left	No head
1-2-3-Right	No heads (team)
2-0-0-Right	Big head
2-0-3-Right	Big heads (team)
0-4-0-Up	Huge head
1-4-1-Right	Big players
3-1-0-Right	Small players
0-5-0-Right	Big football
4-3-3-Up	Invisible
2-3-3-Up	Powered-up team
3-1-2-Left	Powered-up blockers
4-2-1-Up	Powered-up defence
3-1-2-Up	Powered-up offence
2-1-2-Left	Clear weather
2-2-2-Right	Night
5-5-5-Right	Rain
5-5-5-Down	Snow
0-3-0-Down	Fog
0-4-1-Down	Thick fog

NINTENDO 64

FORSAKEN 64

Gain invincibility

When you're at the "Press Start" screen, push **A, Z, Z, Up, Left, Left-C, Left-C and Down-C.**

Need to hear that one more time? On the "Press Start" screen, push the following buttons, **A, Z, Z, Up, Left, Left-C, Left-C and Down-C.**



PLAYSTATION

METAL GEAR SOLID



Here's some stuff that might be useful if you've managed to get your sticky mitts on the import version of MGS and have already got really good at it.

Proving just what a game of depth Metal Gear Solid is, there's still plenty to see if you've finished the game. There certainly aren't many games you'd want to come back to once you've finished them, but MGS has such attention to detail that you might just find that you want to. If you complete the game twice, for example, the third time round, Solid Snake will change into a tuxedo. Fourth time he'll change into a ninja costume. If you successfully complete the game without submitting to the torture, you'll save Meryl and receive the bandana, which gives you unlimited ammunition.

If you play the game using a memory card that contains a saved game from any prior Konami title, such as Castlevania, ISS Soccer, Suikoden or Silent Hill, and Psycho Mantis will then start talking about them when he reads your mind.

There's a camera that you may have missed, too. Reach area B2 of the tank hangar. At the end of the hallway, to the right side of the door where you fight Revolver, is a secret room that you can enter after using C4 explosive. In the room are Level 4 and Level 6 doors. The camera is in the room behind the Level 4 door and you can, er... take pictures with it.

Once you have got the

camera, follow Meryl into the Women's bathroom. If you make it to the last stall quick enough, you'll catch her with her pants down. You can even take a picture of her with the camera, if you're that kind of a sicko.

And wondering how to defeat Psycho Mantis? Plug the controller in to port two and press any button before fighting him. Use the second controller to fight him, to keep him from knowing your moves. Alternatively, shoot the statues in the top corners – this will render Psycho Mantis helpless without his psychic abilities.





1080°

BOMBERMAN HERO

It's simple, really, all you need to do is press A, B and Z at some point during the game and you will now get access to a level-select option. Pink feet frenzy!

PLAYSTATION

TENCHU



It's long been a kind of tradition in video games to feature end-of-level bosses. These guard the way into the next level and tax your new skills just that little bit further, and Tenchu is no exception. Here's how to beat the big, bad bosses...



Stage 1
The swordsman will take some time before he draws his sword, so attack before he does. He will also change direction rapidly and might catch you out with his wide swings, so watch out. The accountant has a gun, and will fire at you to protect the swordsman. If you kill the swordsman first, then the accountant should give you no problems.



Stage 3
You need to strike as the boss prepares to let rip with his overhead chop. He will then sweep his club along the floor as he misses, which is your cue to jump and then strike. Occasionally this guy will also swing his club in a wide arc. Avoid this move by circling round behind him to attack. If he's brought his dog with him, clobber the wet-nosed bast first.

Stage 4
Take out the first boss using the same strategy as before – if anything, he

should be easier. The second boss is tricky. Watch for his fast kick attacks. Strike when he is bounding around or just after he jumps, but not while he's halfway through pulling off a jump-kick.

Stage 5
Watch as he swings wide and rapidly. Be especially wary of his hook and make sure that he doesn't push you to the back of the boat. Another gunner will make your life difficult given half a chance – push him into the water with bombs, or drain his energy with slashes.

Stage 7
As before, but this time you'll need to take off all 200 of the boss's life points. You can both fall off the building and still continue fighting, though neither of you will take damage.

Stage 8
The last boss is not a pushover. He has a nasty lightning attack that rarely misses, so get in early. His energy is high, so if you need to heal, run away to the far corners of the room where you should be more safe. His swordplay consists of several forward slashes and a fast spinning slash; however, they aren't that dangerous if you're alert. Keep hitting him, moving forwards and not letting up your barrage, and he should fall easily.

Stage 4
Take out the first boss using the same strategy as before – if anything, he

As should have become obvious from this issue's Games Night (page 68), there's only one person round here who's really any good at 1080°. Me. Unfortunately, I'm pretty hopeless at most other games, but with 1080° rising in the charts, sitting down and playing on the office N64 for a couple of snowy afternoons when everybody else was busy doing some proper work seemed like the only decent thing a man could do. I harped on about getting to grips with the control methods in the last issue of *Arcade*, and by way of a follow up, here's a little board, rider and track info.

Board-wise, always pick the Tahoe 155. For Contest and Trick attack, use Ricky and Rob. For Air Make in the Trick attack, use Kensuke. For the Half-pipe, Ricky and Rob are good, but Dion Blaster is definitely the best because his speed enables him to make some major air. Akari is the best jumper, so use her when you're going for the Air Make in Trick attack.

Crystal Lake Time attack

Ignore the initial two jumps and first drop off. Take the ramp to the side of the house on the right, crouching. Ensure that the board is level with the ramp, and aim for the snow behind. Hang left at the TV screen. You ought to be able to crouch for the majority of the remaining track.

Trick attack

Take the first two jumps, hang left at the hill and jump by the rock. Ignore the ramp by the house, but grab some air from the right banks. Spin and grab as much as possible up to the finish line.

Crystal Peak Time attack

Ignore the first jump, and head right at the fork, jump the ledge and keep your board to the snow. Take the left next fork, clinging to the left side. Once you're over the ice, take a sharp right then left at the wall. Hang to the right, and stay low



once you're back out in the clear. Again, cling right. Hold Z at the bumps and ensure your board remains parallel to the ground as much as possible.

Trick attack

Take the first jump, then the jump to the left. Veer right, then up the middle to the big jump. Skirt right at the fork for a straight path that's just crying out for some serious stunting. Past the TV screen, take the first jump, ignore the second and take the far-left third.

Golden Forest Time attack

Hang a crucial right at the first fork, but ease up on the Z button to avoid the right-hand bank. Ignore the powder snow at the opening (stay right), jump over the two logs and stay in the middle of the track as you fork left to avoid hitting your head. Jump the first log, but then go round the second. Follow the frozen stream, and keep an eye out for the rock you'll meet at the drop-off.

Trick attack

You can take the same route as above. Jump at the top of every hill, and make use of the big log and waterfall.

Mountain Village Time attack

Initially hold Z and make sure you stay on the snow. As the path opens, cling left, fall on to the rocks and adhere to the left all the way to the tunnel. Fork right (watching for the walls), right again (hugging the right wall) and left. Jump the two logs and then take the hill side past the road. Board left past the big pile of snow and ramp. Turn right at the black and

yellow jump, and then do your best to stay on the pavement the rest of the way.

Trick attack

Follow the path and take the huge jump through the hut. Hang a right, left and jump on to the big rock. Follow the same path to the pile of snow, skate up the ramp and stay left of the pipe. Aim for the black and yellow jump-in, follow the path and then make healthy use of the red car to pull off as much stunting as possible.

Dragon Forest Time attack

To begin with, keep strictly to the snow, then take the bridge. Fork left, jump into the tunnel and stay in for as long as you possibly can. Finally, go to the right of the house for the fastest route home.

Trick attack

Fork right for more jumpage.

Deadly Fall Time attack

Keep straight and miss the bumps. Take the ramp on to the big rock, jumping at the top to get across. Next, follow the narrow path to the right, straighten up, over the two cliffs, and go left at the big ice trench. Ignore the left turning, in preference to veering left a little and leaping off the cliff. Take the middle path, hang a left round the tall rocks and bingo! You're home free.

Trick attack

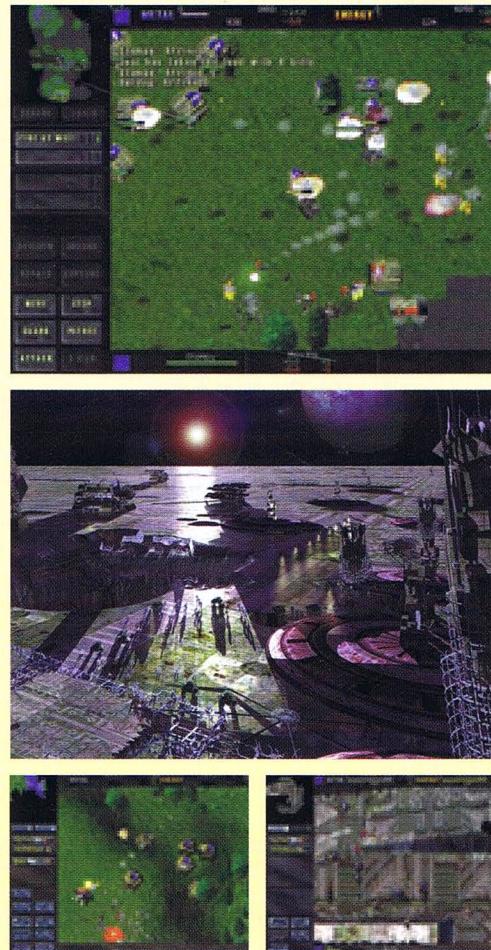
Keep right to find the jumps. The only ramp is between the four tall rocks. You can climb quite a lot of the rocks by first pressing, and then repeatedly tapping the Z button.

TOTAL ANNIHILATION

In *Arcade 1*, *Total Annihilation* won our "Best of Breed" award in the "Strategy" section, where we said it was "faster, meaner and far more involved than any other strategy title on the market". And, better still, it's now out on budget. Cheats abound...

To select a mission, click on the "Single Player" icon. You need to type "drdeath" at the single-player game screen and then click on the bone symbol. Begin a game in skirmish or multi-player mode, press [enter] then the [plus] key on the numeric keypad, and enter the code that you want from this list:

CODE:	EFFECT:
ATM	Increase metal and energy by 1,000
CLOCK	Display game clock
CDSTOP or CDPLAY	Play CD music
CDSTOP	Stop CD music
CONTOUR<1-15>	View 3D contour mesh
CONTROL<0-3>	Control skirmish AI
DITHER	Dithering replaces grey line of sight
DOUBLESHOT	Double weapon damage
HALFSHOT	Half weapon damage
ILOSE	Lost game
IWIN	Win game
KILL	Kill all units
LIGHT	1,000 darker structures
LIGHT	Black structures
NOENERGY	Decrease energy
NOMETAL	Decrease metal
NOSHAKESCREEN	Disable explosion screen effect
NOWISE OR LOS	Full map, disable line of sight
RADAR	Full radar
SHADOW	Toggle object shadowing
SING	Units sing when highlighted
SOUND 3D	Toggle 3D sound
SWITCHALT	Press [alt] + «number» to switch units
VIEW <0-3>	View opponent's energy, metal
SHARE RADAR	Share radar1
SHARE METAL	Share metal1
SHARE ENERGY	Share energy1
SHARE ALL	Share all resources1
SHOOTALL	Also shoot buildings



KLINGON HONOR GUARD

Of course the best thing about *Star Trek* is the metaphors it's given us for one of the only hobbies that seems just as male-orientated as videogaming, what with "Shaking hands with a Klingon", "Taking Captain Picard to Warp Speed" and the like. *Klingon Honor Guard* was the first *Star Trek* game to let you do some killing, implementing the *Star Trek* universe into a *Doom*-style shooter. Naturally, therefore, there are plenty of cool cheats available. Press [tab] during gameplay, then type one of the following codes.

CODE:	EFFECT:
ALLAMMO	999 of all ammunition
BEHINDVIEW 1	External view
BEHINDVIEW 0	Normal view
FLUSH	Reset bad textures
FLY	Fly mode
GHOST	No clipping mode
GOD	God mode
HIDEACTORS	Hide everything
SHOWACTORS	Show everything
INVISIBLE0	Disable invisibility
INVISIBLE1	Invisibility
KILLALL «MONSTER NAME»	Kill selected monsters
KILLPAWNS	Kill all monsters
OPEN «MAP NAME»	Level select
PLAYERSONLY	Disable timer
SLOMO «NUMBER»	Set game speed
SUMMON «ITEM»	Summon item
SUICIDE	Suicide
WALK	Walk mode
ACTIVATEITEM	Activate item
ADDBOTS «NUMBER»	Add more bots
CDTRACK «NUMBER»	Play the specified CD track



NINTENDO 64

WCW VS NWO REVENGE



Here's a very easy way to both win all the challenges and unlock the secret characters.

Select the belt you want to win and pick the Super Brawl ring. As soon as the match starts, throw your opponent outside of the ring. Get him on to the entrance ramp and throw him out into the black space. He will disappear.

Move out of the way and then let him run all the way back to the ring. He will hit the ring and be stunned. While he is still stunned, grab him and throw him again. Keep doing this until about three seconds remain before you are counted out. Now run toward the ring holding C-Down and you will slide into the ring. Your opponent will be counted out.

For a quick win, start a match, then get out of the

ring, run toward the entrance and grab a weapon. Run toward your opponent using Down-C and hit B when you reach him to knock him flat on his back. Repeat this five or six times and he ought to buy it. To block a weapon attack, press Left and Right whenever an opponent is trying to hit you with a weapon – this should enable you to grab their weapons.

Also, you did know that you can change your taunt by pressing Down, and mimic your opponent's taunt by rotating the analogue stick anti-clockwise, didn't you? You didn't? Just as well we thought to mention it, then.

CRUIS'N WORLD

■ An expansion on our words from last issue – some more tricks to try out as you fling your car around in *Cruis'n World*.

When you want to overtake another computer racer easily, tap A twice to do a wheelie when you are immediately behind someone. They will veer out of the way instantly. This really helps when you are on your final lap and need to catch up quickly. Don't wheelie too often, though, because you can't turn well while you're doing it. You can get a turbo boost and then wheelie right over everybody by pressing the gas and quickly shifting into first gear just before the "set" (of "Ready, set, go!") begins to disappear. Remember, you'll need to shift all the way up to fourth gear afterwards.

You get the chance to play on the Moon if you finish the



"Cruis'n the World" mode and wait for the credits to end.

If you get into big trouble, you can speed right through a collision or on-coming traffic with a turbo boost.

If you're looking for some more tricks to add to your list and rack-up points then why not impress your mates and try these? Do a 360° at the top of the ramp by pushing left or right. Pop a wheelie on a jump to do a flip. Do a barrel-roll by flicking the joystick 180° when pulling a sideways flip. And do a flip-roll by doing a normal flip during a jump, then pressing B, B, A, B, C-Up to roll in mid-air.

BODY HARVEST

■ Imagine a world with huge, hideous creatures, unfazed by the heaviest artillery the military can muster. A world of flesh-eating mutants, who are hell-bent on reducing the population of Small Town USA to an unhealthy zero, and a lone hero – Earth's last hope of avoiding its decidedly grisly fate as a larder for a race of gory alien superbeings.

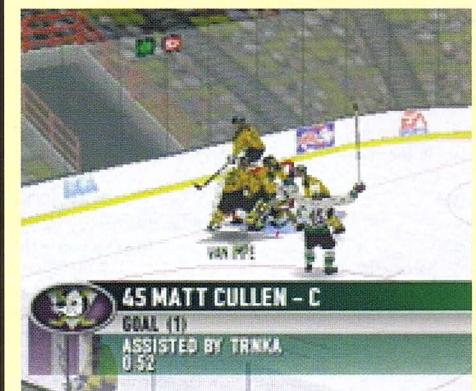
Or you could just play *Body Harvest*, saving your imagination the trouble. *Body Harvest* scored four stars in Arcade 1.

Use the name ICHEAT, and get ready for some in-game button action. Try C-Down, C-Up, Up, Z,

Z, Left and C-Right to make your weapons more powerful, or C-Down, Up, Right, Right, C-Right, A and Left to get some weird graphical doings.

If you know where to look for it, there's a secret room in stage one of Greece, as well. It's a good place to pick up a machine gun, fuel and health. Go into the mine where you picked up the TNT. Go to the right wall to the torch closest to the chest that contained the TNT. When you reach the torch, press A. The nearby wall will open, leading to some stairs. Go up the stairs and you will find two barrels with water in them and one chest. The chest contains the machine gun. The barrels contain the handy extra helpings of fuel and the health.

NHL 99



■ Enter these codes on the password screen.

On the N64, try:

BRAINY	Big heads
BIGBIG	Big players
FREEEA	EA Blades and EA Storm teams
FAST	Faster gameplay

And on the PlayStation, opt for:

3RD	Alternate jerseys
BRAINY	Big heads
BIGBIG	Big players
FREEEA	EA Blades and EA Storm teams
SPEEDY	Faster gameplay
VICTORY	FMV sequence

COLONY WARS VENGEANCE

■ Chronic Stimulation or Colonic Irritation? It's all a matter of preference, really, but it's safe to say that *CWV*'s a game that could benefit from some codes. Lucky, then, that we've got these for you. (You have to enter the first letter as a capital, and the others as small letters – just like your name.)

Vampire
Tornado
Dark Angel
Chimera
Avalanche
Hydra
Thunderchild
Demon
Blizzard
Stormlord

Invincibility
All weapons
Primary weapons
Unlimited secondary weapons
Unlimited afterburners
Unlimited money
All ships
Mission and FMV select
Multiple cheats
Disable cheats



TEST DRIVE 5

■ It's at times like these that you can't help but begin to wonder: is there anyone actually reading? If you are, then let's hope you own *Test Drive 5* and want to know if there are any cheats. And not liking to disappoint...

To unlock all the game modes, enter VRSIX as a name on the high-score screen, and save the game settings. For all the tracks and cars, enter RONE, NTHREE, and MTHREE as names on the

TIME CRISIS

■ Stuff on the recent Platinum re-release.

Wait for the main screen with the three target boxes. Shoot the hole in the centre of the letter "R" in the word "CRISIS" twice, then shoot inside the cross hairs that are next to the word "TIME" twice. A cheat menu with life, credit and shot options will appear. To select your level, hold L1+ X + O for

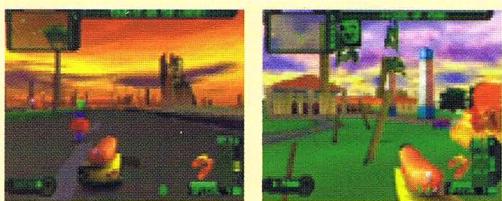


■ *Time Crisis*: Watch men die! It's really rather good.



■ Head into wide, open 3D space in *Colony Wars*.

ROGUE TRIP



■ Enter the following as passwords:

Alien saucer

Play as Goliath

Play as Nightshade

Play as Helicopter

Double pick-ups

Increased armour

Unlimited turbos

Unlimited jumps

Funtopia level

Gulch level

Boss battle

Boss battle 2

Boss battle with Big Daddy

R1, @, @, @, L2, @

@, L1, R1, @, L2, L2

R1, R2, L1, L1, @,

L1, @, R2, @, @, R1

L1, L2, @, L1, R1, @

R1, @, R1, @, L1, @

@, @, @, R1, R2

@, @, R2, @, @, R2

@, @, L2, @, @, L1

@, @, @, L1, L2, @

@, R2, R1, @, L1, R2

@, @, L2, L1, @, @

@, @, @, @, R2, R2

MEGAMAN LEGENDS

■ If you hold L1 or R1 and jump to roll to either side you'll be temporarily invincible.

To get unlimited money, you must repeatedly play the Beast Hunter game at the studio, or locate the garbage can and pop can on the ground near the Jetlad

Bakery on the Shopping Street, kick the can into the bakery and speak to the woman inside to receive \$1,000. You can repeat this as often as you like. For an extra life, you need to shoot the things that look like Lego Pirates which appear when some baddies are killed.

COOL BOARDERS 3

■ Select tournament mode and enter as a name:

WONITALL

OPEN EM

BIGHEADS

All tracks

All boarders

Big head mode



■ Struggling to avoid looking pissed on the piste? Use our cheats to have a go at any track...

PC



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX

■ You probably already know that Tom Clancy is a novelist, but since we're a videogame magazine that takes things just a little further, mixing the games stuff up with bits on films, videos and music too, we thought we should investigate a little more deeply.

First, we asked Robin Alway, Arcade's Games Editor, if he knew who Tom Clancy was. Unfortunately, Mr Alway claimed that he didn't read books (much too busy playing games), but suggested that he could pass us over to Arcade's literary-type, Sam Richards. Mr Richards was able to shed a

little much needed light on the subject of Tom Clancy.

"He writes story books," Sam told us. Unfortunately, Mr Richards was unable to confirm whether Tom Clancy had recently written a novel called *Rainbow Six*, but when we asked Mr Neil West, Editor of this esteemed journal, we were told, "I think so." The mystery was therefore solved. And so...

Press [enter] while playing and type MEGANOGGIN for huge head mode, or if you're running short of vital firepower, type in 5FINGERDISCOUNT to get yourself an ammo refill.

THE FIFTH ELEMENT

■ Enter one of the following codes at the main menu, then select "New Game".

Code

RALPH

DAVID

THIERRY

JEROME

OLIVIER

Effect

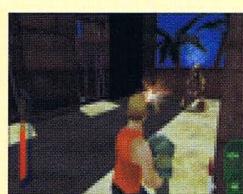
Level select

Unlimited ammo

Enemy steps

Shield

All weapons



LITTLE BIG ADVENTURE 2

■ Recently re-released on budget, and reviewed in the last issue of *Arcade*.

To get into the cheat mode, press [esc] during game play and then type:

CODE:

LIFE

MAGIC

FULL

GOLD

SPEED

CLOVER

BOX

PINGOUIN

EFFECT:

Full life

Full magic

clovers

50 coins

Display frame-rate

Clover

Clover box

Mega-penguin

ODDWORLD ABE'S ODDYSEE



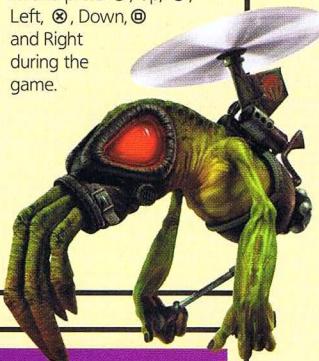
■ Featuring a scrawny little alien, sequelled by Abe's Exoddus, and just recently re-released at a budget price for the PlayStation and PC.

■ On the PC:

Hold [shift] on the main menu and press Up, Left, Right, @, @, @, @, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right and Down, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right and Up to select a level.

■ On the PlayStation,

to select the level, hold R1 and press Down, Right, Left, Right, @, @, @, @, Right and Left at the first option screen, where



SEGA SATURN

RADIANT SILVERGUN

■ Some weapon info for the Saturn blaster.

[A+C/Y] Back-wide shot

Shoots a column of Vulcans forward and more spread out in the back.

[A+B/Z] Homing plasma

Locks on to two objects and fires lightning that becomes stronger. Shoots through walls and can take out two objects at a time.

[A+B+C/R] Radiant sword

The strongest weapon of the bunch. Short range, but if you stick out your sword to inflict max damage, you can destroy the medium-sized missiles on Stage 4 and cut through pink bullets.

CLOCKING OFF

■ Fuck me, I'm knackered. Never again. Well, not until next month at least, when we'll be bringing you a complete guide to... Okay. I'll come clean, I haven't got the foggiest.

■ If you've got any tips that we ought to know about, write to us at:

Arcade

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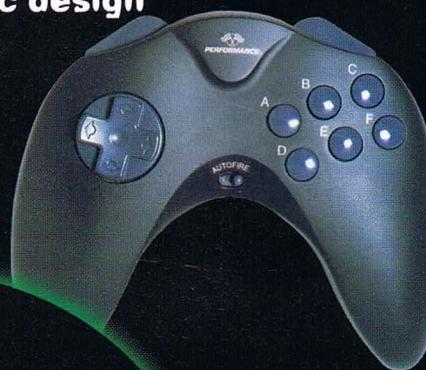
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ARReview

The Ultimate Game Buyer's Guide

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Sin
South Park
Thief: The Dark Project
V-Rally 64
Wargasm
WipEout 64
Xenogears
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

CRASH BANDICOOT 3: WARPED

IN THE MONTH OF MIYAMOTO'S LATEST MAGNUM OPUS, AND THE GREATEST 3D SHOOTER EVER, PLAYSTATION COUNTERS WITH A FOX-THING. IN DUNGAREES. CAN IT COPE? YOU MIGHT BE SURPRISED...

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Star ratings

★★★★★ Simply the best. A game you really must play.
★★★★ Excellent. Definitely worth your money.
★★ Good stuff. Not a world-beater, but fine within its genre.
★★ Strictly average. We say: don't buy it.
★ Awful. Avoid at all costs.

New PlayStation Games



■ Will Crash Bandicoot ever match the class of Sonic and Mario? Sony hopes so.

CRASH AND GRAB

YOU COULD BE FORGIVEN FOR THINKING CRASH 3 A MERE MONEY-MAKING EXERCISE. IT'S NOT, QUITE



■ Crash Bandicoot 3's outstanding graphics help conjure up the illusion that you're playing a cartoon on TV. This is no accident. Sony wants Crash to appeal to as wide a range of gamers as possible – not only in the UK, but also in the US and Japan.

Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped

■ Publisher: Sony ■ Developer: Naughty Dog
■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: on sale now
■ Players: 1 ■ Extras: Analogue controller, Dual Shock compatible, memory card

Small orange Australian marsupial in third outing as Sony's premier platform performer. Isn't it about time someone gave Mario a bloody good hiding?

Another Christmas – another Crash. What was once Sony proving that its 32-bit PlayStation could easily match the 64-bit excesses of Nintendo's Mario, has become an annual transfer of money from wallet to till. While Nintendo remains too inscrutable to update Mario (yet!), Crash is up to version three, already.

Easy cash criticisms aside, *Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped* smells of real quality. Your nostrils are filled with the reek of superlative graphics, expertly designed levels and the stench of pure, unadulterated havoc and fun. Move Crash from the beginning of each level to its end, without dying too much. Repeat until end of game. It's incredible how soul satisfying such gameplay is.

While Mario has a whole 3D world to run around – fiddling here, dabbling there – Crash has his familiar U-tube of fun. Because of the PlayStation's limitations (it can draw things a long way away, just not very wide: the opposite is true of the N64), Crash's levels are long, but never more than two jumps across, and each is a winding path through exciting and deadly scenery.

Just as Sonic was concerned with blinding speed rather than the slow and steady fire-dodging and ass-pounding of Mario, so Crash is essentially a headlong dash into, out of, and across, the screen. Amusing frogs, medieval knights, scorpions and puffer fish all have it in for you, in a package that's the closest thing we've seen to an interactive cartoon.

Crash 3 looks drop-dead gorgeous. Levels take in lush countryside,

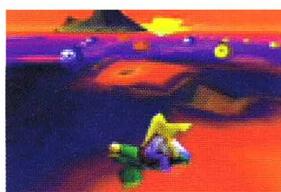
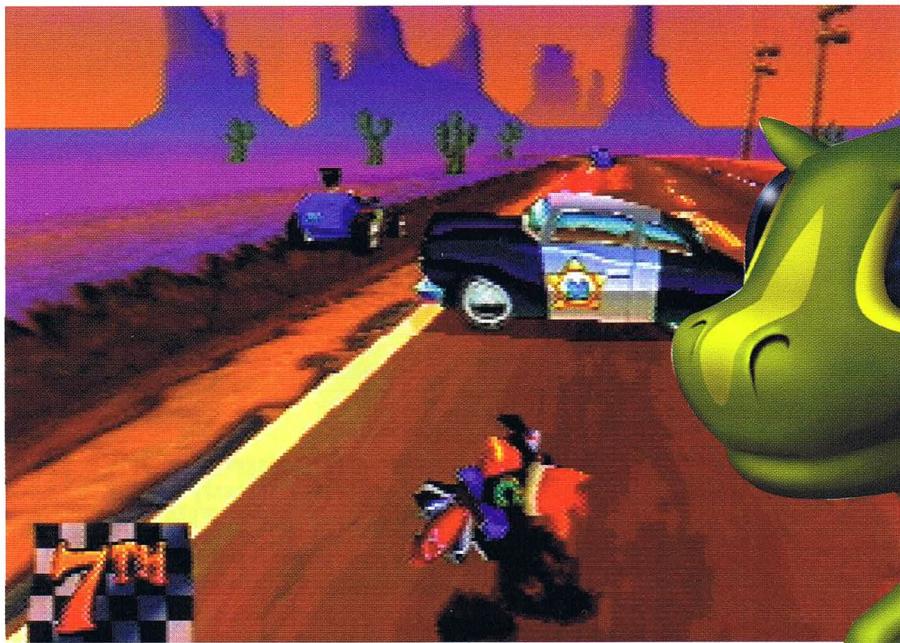
Arabic villages, sci-fi futuredom and, thanks to the new 3D levels, a stretch of American highway, a bi-plane-filled chunk of sky and a ride across the waves on a jetski. And much more. This final trio of themes offer Crash a little more freedom, but the game's edges are never too far away. All three offer what are effectively driving games (only with a hairy car), but they make a welcome change from running and leaping. They also look the business. While Spyro was eminently gorgeous and added a vast element of 3D freedom, Crash delivers a tighter and more claustrophobic sensation. Baddies are never far away, brilliantly detailed scenery pans and swings into view with each pad push and, even when Crash isn't

SUPERLATIVE GRAPHICS, EXPERTLY DESIGNED LEVELS AND THE STENCH OF PURE, UNADULTERATED HAVOC



■ As the Crash Bandicoot series has progressed, the bad guys and level designs have become more complex while Crash has developed a greater freedom of movement.

New PlayStation Games



If Crash's world feels similar to *Spyro the Dragon's*, that's because both games are from the Universal Interactive stable.

running full tilt around the screen, flags are flapping, birds are swooping, and cows are mooing in your face. The screen is so full of stuff you expect it to crack and a torrent of rainbow-coloured, sickly sweet ooze to ruin your carpet. The underwater levels in particular – replete with swishing seaweed and assorted deadly poisons – are lush.

This time Crash is joined by his little sister Cocoa – who, besides the name and, we presume, alternative genitalia – is effectively identical. Shame. The pair once more ride a beast (a tiger) in some mad-dash levels, but a further ride is added in the shape of a small dinosaur who trots amiably around under player control, rather than pelting around like its arse is alight. The final gameplay alteration concerns the ability



for Crash to learn different skills, each one taught by a deceased boss. Crash may then go into battle armed with such abilities as the super spin, double jump and apple bazooka. Bizarre, different and just the sort of thing that stops sour-faces from moaning, "It's just the same as the last one".

However, *Crash 3* does feature the familiar, solid structure, with each of five worlds sporting five levels and a boss. There's no originality here. Beat five levels, beat the boss and gain access to the next world. Beat all five bosses and you've done it, yes? No. A final, sixth world is then unveiled, and each subsequent level is unlocked by replaying previous levels against a very stiff clock. Only then will you meet the final boss. And, as if that wasn't enough, there're coloured gems to be garnered from various levels – 44 in total – in order to finish the thing properly. What this all results in is a game that rewards quickly with its varied levels and easy accessibility, but goes on to deliver a Canadian redwood's life of replay value – quite an achievement.

Crash 3 is the best platformer on the PlayStation, but is it a Mario-beater? Maybe by the time *Crash 6* comes out on PlayStation 2... ★★★★

Dan Griffiths

Up & Downers

Smashing

- Super-fast, super-colourful
- The best PlayStation platformer
- Magnificent replay potential
- It's still no Mario beater
- Simplistic gameplay
- Frequently frustrating



In Japan, Crash Bandicoot is the most successful Western-designed game character. The Japanese otaku love him – and previous Crash Bandicoot titles have eclipsed sales of Sonic, and even Mario.

Crash Bandicoot 1
SCART
Sony saw it and liked it so much it bought the company! Kind of. A little dated now.

Crash Bandicoot 2
SCART
Soon to be Platinum. Good for those wishing to dip their toe in the Bandicoot pool.



SPACE. 1979

2D OR NOT 2D? THAT IS THE QUESTION...

Asteroids

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Syrox ■ Price: £27.99
■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-2

The jury's out. Retrogaming: welcome return of The Proper Videogame or a rather shameless cash-in on thirtysomething nostalgia? *Asteroids*, please take your place in the dock...

Af course, it was all so much simpler back then. All you needed was a spaceship, some spacerocks, et voila – *Asteroids*, a game that, alongside *Space Invaders*, *Defender* and *Pac-Man*, defined the '80s arcade phenomena and emptied the pockets of glassy-eyed teenagers the planet-wide. Today, it might not sound that impressive, but with a disarmingly simple concept (fly ship, shoot rock, repeat to fade), minimal vector graphics and a brooding soundtrack, *Asteroids* managed to make Atari over \$150 million. Your move, *Tekken*.

Twenty years further on and Activision has bought the rights and given *Asteroids* a 3D overhaul. Well, 3D-ish. While the game now sports polygons rather than vector lines, it still works on a 2D plane. Indeed, almost everything from the original has survived – the last ditch escape offered by Hyperspace, the thrust-and-inertia-based movement and, of course, the requirement to clear the screen of nasty boulders intent on smashing your ship to spacebits.

So, what's new? Lots. *Asteroids'* graphics have been bolstered with retina-scorching SFX and FMV sequences, while your ship is no longer a tiny triangle. Each armed

differently, there are four ships now on offer, while you can also pick up a selection of *R-Type*-style power-ups for the ensuing battle, including mines, gun satellites and the ominous-sounding Armageddon; a rather handy purple power-ring that zaps absolutely anything and everything to smithereens. You'll need these, as *Asteroids* is now split into distinct "zones", where you'll have to get the better of black holes, flaming suns and even end-level-style bosses to progress. If that's not enough, the asteroids themselves also come in a crystal variant that swiftly regenerate unless you blast them to nothingness. It makes for varied gameplay and, as the pace ups to frantic levels, boasts a smoother learning curve than the original.

But, as with Irem's forthcoming update of *R-Type*, no amount of polygonal jiggerypokery can disguise the fact that *Asteroids* is still very much *Asteroids*: it's still inherently repetitive, it's still a basic premise and it's still as addictive as fuck. Whether this is because developer Syrox has remained faithful to the original, or because it's just bolted on a few whistles and bells, is pointless to debate. The fact is that while *Asteroids* almost proudly lacks the sophistication of today's strategy-oriented space-shooters, it's still an arcade buzz of galactic proportions. 20 years ago, that would cost 10p of your dinner money. Today, it's around 25 quid.

Your move, space cadet. ★★★ **Mike Goldsmith A**

ACTIVISION HAS BOUGHT THE RIGHTS AND GIVEN ASTEROIDS A 3D OVERHAUL. WELL, 3D-ISH

↑ Uppers & Downers

Old skool

- Bags of hep retro appeal
- Contains a version of the original game
- It's *Asteroids*!

New fool

- Is this retro or rehash?
- Very repetitive gameplay
- It's still only *Asteroids*!

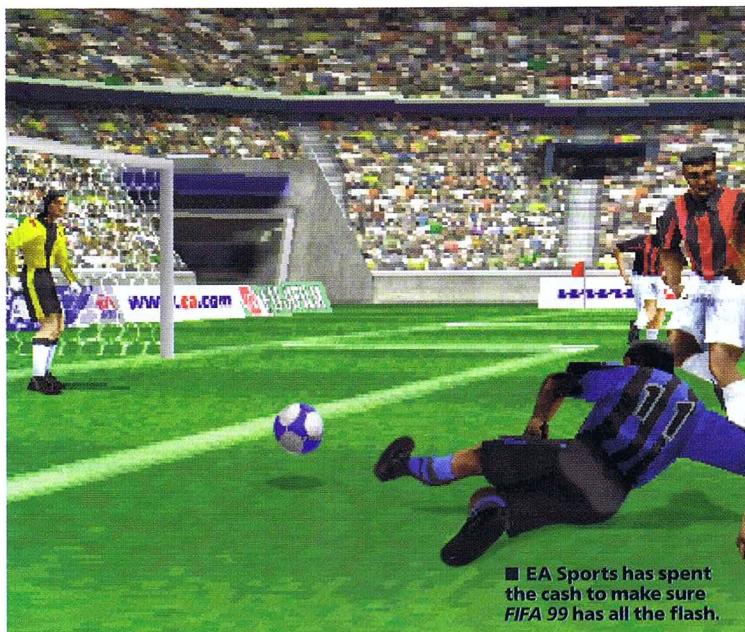
Or you could try...

R-Type
Virgin Interactive ★★★
2D arcade blasting at its most sublime.

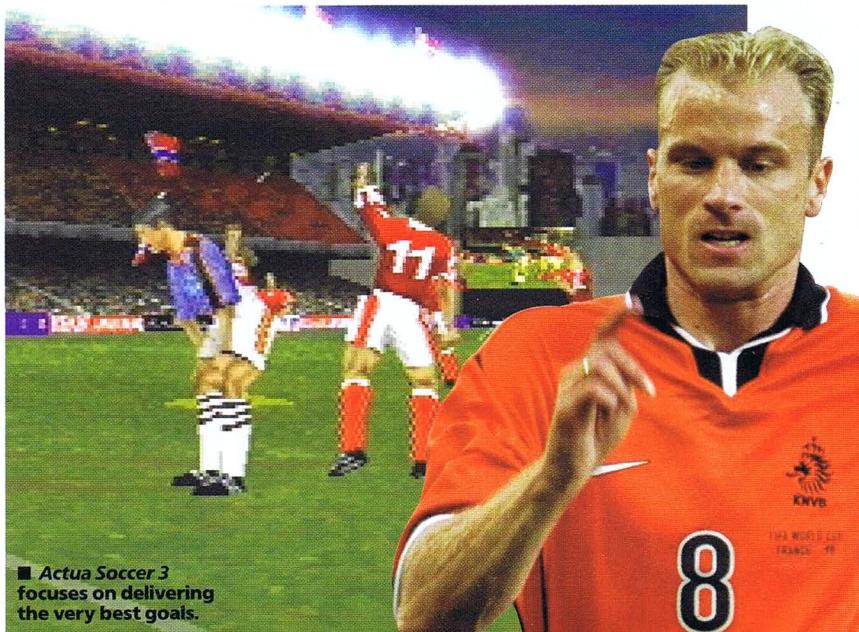
Test Drive Off Road
EA **
Trucks and, um... rocks.

Group Test

FIFA 99 VS LIBERO GRANDE VS ACTUA SOCCER 3 VS MICHAEL OWEN'S WORLD LEAGUE SOCCER '99



■ EA Sports has spent the cash to make sure *FIFA 99* has all the flash.

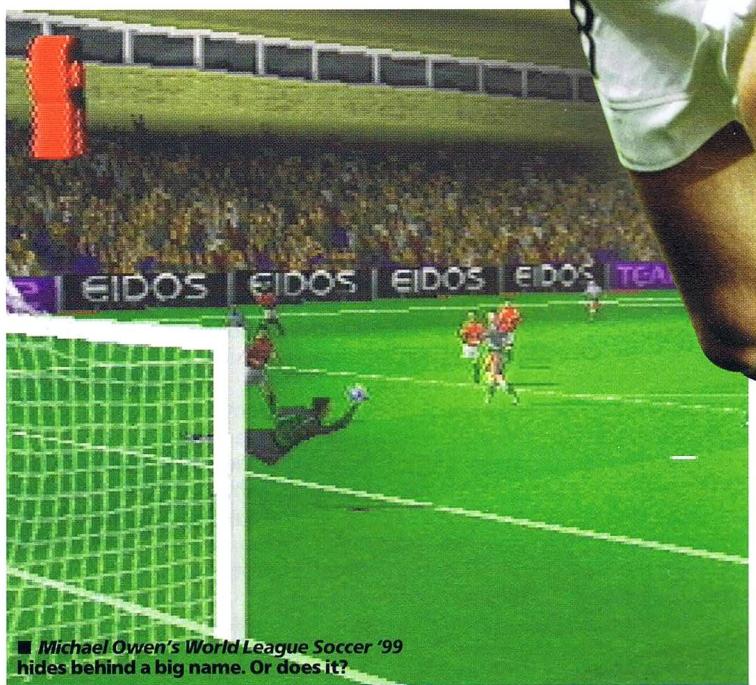


■ *Actua Soccer 3* focuses on delivering the very best goals.

THE BIG MATCH-UP FOUR FOOTY GAMES, ONLY ONE WINNER



■ *Libero Grande* offers a whole new perspective.



■ *Michael Owen's World League Soccer '99* hides behind a big name. Or does it?

This is a new reviewing style for Arcade – the giant-sized Group Test. But when a quartet of major new PlayStation football games arrive all at once, what else are we meant to do? So join us, as all four new boys test their footballing mettle in the ultimate head-to-head. It'll be just like Match of the Day.

All good football managers know, the season doesn't start until after Christmas. But with console football games, the pre-Christmas period is all-too-important. It's when all us armchair Adamses and sofa Southgates look forward to long Christmas holidays sat in front of the telly. And I'm not talking about watching *The Sound of Music*. Yes, the Christmas holiday week is the World Cup of the videogame footy world, which explains why we've suddenly got four big new football titles, all raring to go.

The question is, of course, which should you buy? Which is going to offer both an entertaining, easy-to-pick-up game and the depth to last you a full season? Which is best for beginners and which is best for the seasoned pro? We could be about to see a real upset. After all, anything can happen in football...

The line up

Three of these games have histories – *World League Soccer '99*, *Actua Soccer 3* and, particularly, *FIFA 99* – while 1998/99 is the debut season for Namco's *Libero Grande*. Last year saw the domination of an earlier *FIFA* game, but *World League Soccer '98* came close

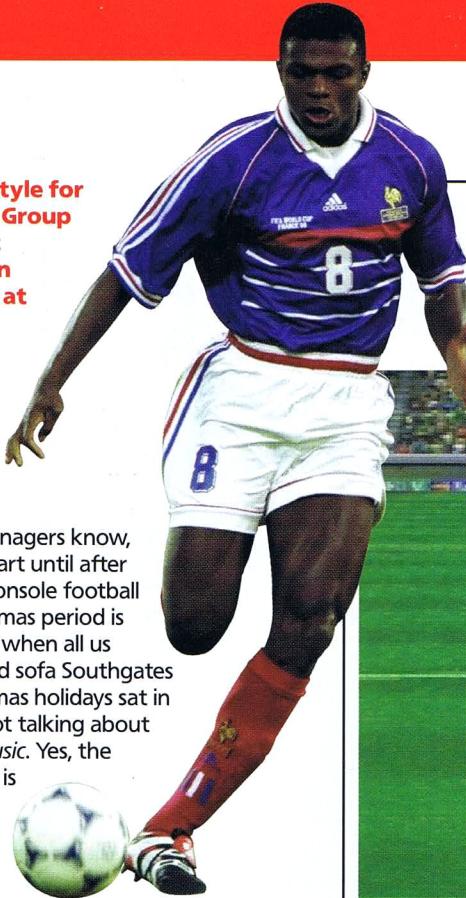
■ EA's *FIFA 99* employs the non-flying Dutchman to appear in its lush introduction. And no, there's no "Nude Raider" cheat. Thank God.

FIFA 99 HAS ALL THE SHEEN, WITH FATBOY SLIM ON THE SOUNDTRACK AND GUIDED TOURS OF STADIUMS

to knocking it aside. Now is its chance for a second tilt at the title, this time adding the considerable extra firepower of endorsement by England's Great Hope™, Michael Owen. So is the new *FIFA 99* up to the challenge, especially with *Actua Soccer 3* rightly also fancying its chances?

FIFA, as always, has all the sheen: Fatboy Slim on the soundtrack, gleaming FMV intros, guided tours of the game's stadiums, half the world's best footballers endorsing its various menus – Bergkamp and Vieri included – and, of course, the official *FIFA* license. But, naturally, none of that really matters. Except the license, I suppose, which is handy to have, especially as *FIFA* can happily call its qualifying tournament the European Qualifiers rather than *World League Soccer*'s rather less specific "Cup" and "League".

Thankfully – and rather oddly – the lack of a *FIFA* license hasn't prevented *Actua* and *WLS* from including real players' names. Unlike *ISS Pro '98*, say, which felt compelled to do things like replace "Southgate" with



SLICK & SHALLOW



■ It looks great, but can *FIFA 99* keep your interest for the whole season?

FIFA 99

■ Publisher: EA Sports ■ Developer: EA Sports ■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: On sale now ■ Players: 1-2

As a series, it's been around longer than Chris Waddle. So can the best-selling *FIFA* still cut it?

FIJA '99 is much like *FIFA* has always been: it's probably the fastest football game of them all, with play swinging from one end to the other without breaking a sweat. And, because of that, it's simplistic to play but attractive – at least to begin with.

Where the game pulls up with a dodgy hamstring is in its long-term challenge. Or, rather, lack of it. There are enough moves but, once you discover that the "sprint" is fast enough to take you past most opposition defenses, and a diagonal run into the box will almost always result in a goal, there seems little point in trying anything else. So you don't. This results in 7-0 trouncings of Brazil and an unsatisfyingly easy World Cup win. And is there any fun in that?

Perhaps *FIFA 99* is most suited to beginners, players who don't want to try that hard, or those who find the technical prowess of *ISS Pro '98* a bit of a drag. Certainly, you won't find an easier football game than this. You can make use of the other moves in the *FIFA* inventory, of course, but, if all else fails, there's always that sure-fire "diagonal" goal. The problem with that, of course, is that we feel it defeats the whole object of football games. You're not prompted to dig deep (or, indeed, give it a hundred and ten percent), and so you'll never discover the watery-eyed wonder of a seven-man move topped off with a first-time volley on the half turn. *FIFA 99*, then – easy, good enough, but never fulfilling.



■ No one handles in-game animations and fancy frilling as well as EA Sports.

WHERE IT PULLS UP WITH A DODGY HAMSTRING IS IN ITS CHALLENGE

Uppers & Downers

Bergkamp

- Fast end-to-end stuff
- Easy to play, easy to master
- Slick presentation
- Big name commentary

Boa Morte

- Same goal every time
- Speed-up too effective
- Obvious lack of any depth
- Still doesn't feel like it's made by people who really care about football. In fact, you can almost tell they call it "soccer" instead

Group Test

FANCY DAN FOOTBALL



■ "You shoot! You score! You defend! You get sent off! Um, it doesn't matter! You shoot again!" You only control one player in *Libero Grande*, so it's all up to you.

Libero Grande

■ Publisher: Sony ■ Developer: Namco ■ Price: £39.99
■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-2

From the developers of *Tekken 3* comes a new experience in football games...

Libero Grande is entirely original. It's the only football game in the world where you can choose an international superstar from a list of 12 and then control him – and only him – for a full 90 minutes. This originality is commendable.

The fact that the game doesn't really work, then, is a bit of a disappointment on the Andy Cole Scale of Disappointments™. The reason is simple: there's just not enough for the player to do. You chase around after the play, trying to grab the ball for yourself and then, when

you finally get it, realise you have to quickly lay it off so the team can make progress up the field.

Damn. For at least 90% of

the time, then, you don't actually have the ball.

Strangely, this isn't even the most frustrating part of the game. Instead, it's having to rely on the computer opponents who behave, for the most part, like Shambler from *Quake*. In the penalty box, they just run forward until the opposition goalie dives at their feet; and, if you're running with the ball, they'll chase after you for no apparent reason. It would be refreshing to see them try to cross, or slide the ball across the box to you. As it is, whenever you get the ball you're loathe to give it back, because they'll just mess it up. And, surely, that's not how a football game should be.

Libero Grand is a brave attempt at introducing something new, then, but ultimately the attempt fails.

Uppers & Downers

Grande
■ Original, interesting idea
■ Pleasant visuals
■ Quirky two-player split-screen mode

Bland
■ Too much running around doing nothing
■ Unrealistic, with strikers having to defend
■ Desperately stupid computer team mates
■ Lack of goal-scoring variety

the lawsuit-friendly (and, indeed, cockney-friendly) version "Sathgate." It may not sound like much of a big difference, but it does help build a sense of realism.

Kicking off

FIFA is probably the easiest game to get into, mainly because you can guarantee a win using just two buttons. Vigorously tap Sprint, head out to the wings, get past the last defender, then veer diagonally into the area and press Shoot. Not very satisfying, admittedly, but handy if you lack patience. Or ability. Or both.

WLS '99 is the opposite. To stand the remotest chance of beating computer opposition – which, even at the back-end of world football, is packed with brilliant players – you need to learn every move and relentlessly pursue a passing game. Which leaves you far more content than the all-too-brief *FIFA* experience. Okay, so it requires a little more work but, if you stick at it, it quickly becomes a fantastic example of how to use the complete football arsenal: passing, crossing, running, dribbling, shooting, and scoring.

Actua Soccer 3 is somewhere between *FIFA* and *WLS '99*. It's easier to win, even for a beginner. This said, scoring truly spectacular, or even just pleasing, goals requires more work. *Actua* is simpler than *WLS* because it doesn't have as many moves. But at the same time, you won't be running your computer opponents ragged from the moment you start, as there aren't many "sweet spots" – places where you can score from every time.

Which just leaves *Libero Grande*, undoubtedly the hardest game to get a feel for, simply because you have to

ACTUA IS THE HOME OF A SHOUTY BARRY DAVIES, CARRYING ON LIKE ALAN PARTRIDGE

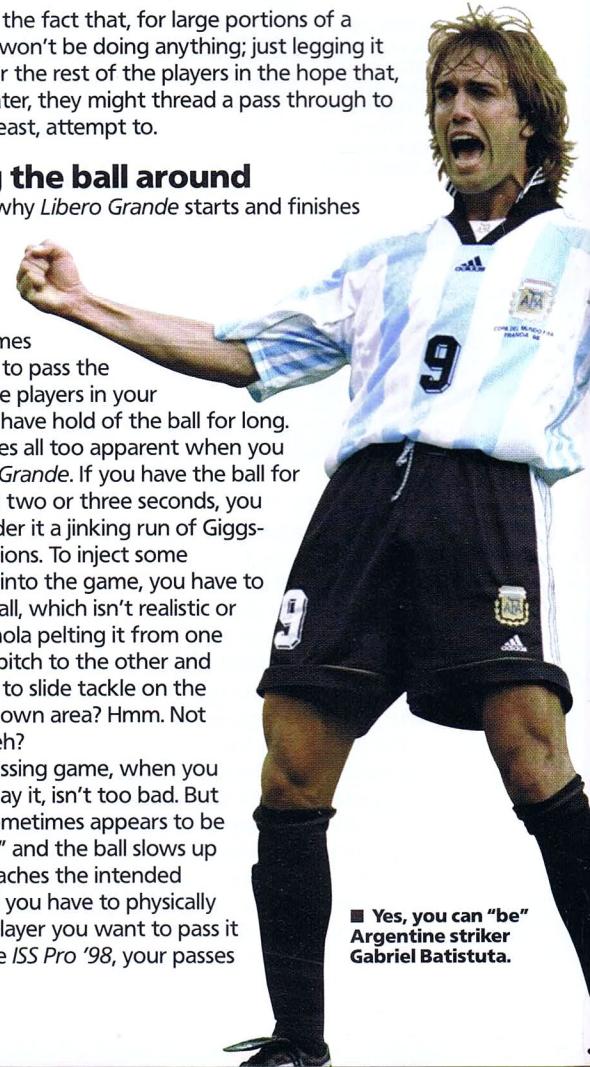
get used to the fact that, for large portions of a match, you won't be doing anything; just legging it around after the rest of the players in the hope that, sooner or later, they might thread a pass through to you. Or, at least, attempt to.

Passing the ball around

And this is why *Libero Grande* starts and finishes firmly in fourth place. As most

football games require you to pass the ball a lot, the players in your team don't have hold of the ball for long. This becomes all too apparent when you play *Libero Grande*. If you have the ball for longer than two or three seconds, you could consider it a jinking run of Giggs-like proportions. To inject some excitement into the game, you have to chase the ball, which isn't realistic or exciting. Ginola pelting it from one end of the pitch to the other and attempting to slide tackle on the edge of his own area? Hmm. Not very likely, eh?

FIFA's passing game, when you decide to play it, isn't too bad. But the pitch sometimes appears to be a bit "gluey" and the ball slows up before it reaches the intended target. And you have to physically select the player you want to pass it to, so, unlike *ISS Pro '98*, your passes



■ Yes, you can "be" Argentine striker Gabriel Batistuta.

won't always find another member of your team: they often find very large spaces and are soon swept up by the opposition.

WLS and Actua
Soccer are the strongest in this department. The "viewing" area in *Actua Soccer*'s pitch is a perfect size, so there'll always be a player you can see to pass the ball to. And the passing is nice and fast and crisp. You pass and it usually gets there.

WLS is even better. The controls are beautifully responsive – you press Pass and it does it straight away, unlike *FIFA* where the players have to finish off their animation before they can be bothered to do anything. And there's always a player in front of you, so when you try through balls and long punts, one of your guys is there to try and link up play. This makes *WLS* an attractive game of football, perhaps even as good as *ISS Pro '98*.

Go for goals

Scoring in all four games requires different levels of dedication, but the best goals consistently crop up in *Actua* and *WLS*. *Actua*, in particular, is the home of spectacular finishing, with a shouty Barry Davies carrying on like Alan Partridge (without any of the "Twat! Did you see that?!"), obviously. Curling

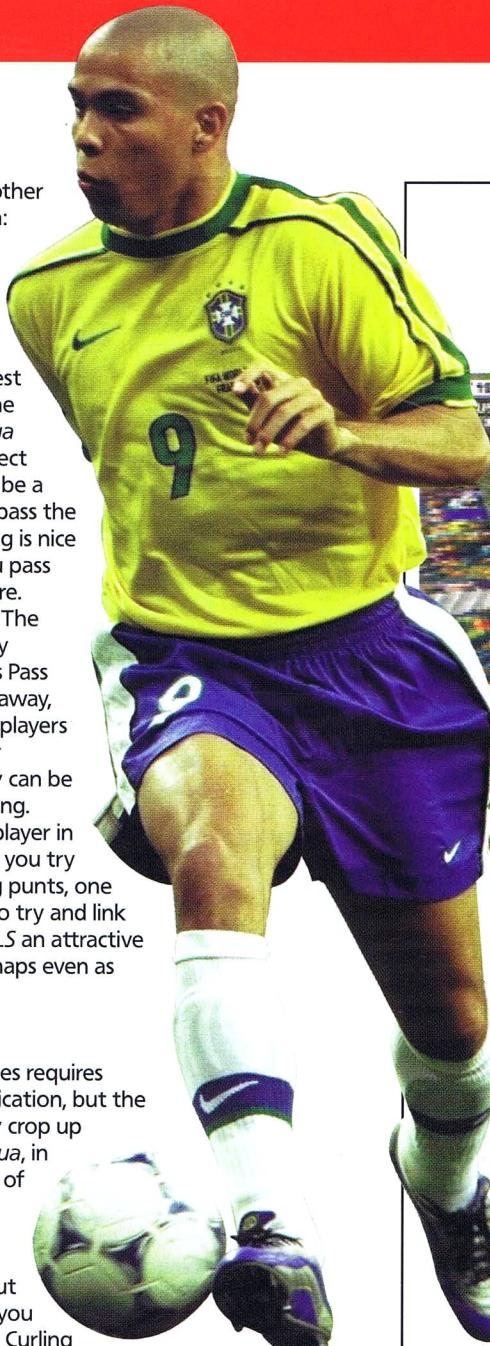
the ball in *Actua* – by applying aftertouch – is as easy as passing and, once you've launched a goalward effort, you can swing the ball away from the 'keeper into the corners of the goal for a real Beckham-style finish. It's lovely stuff.

WLS doesn't have the eye-blinding finishing, but it does have countless ways to score: diving headers, looping headers, volleys, half-volleys, chips, piledrivers, curlers – all perfectly easy to decipher from one another. Some require button combos – in association with R1 and R2 – but pull them off, and you'll realise why *WLS* is the best PlayStation football game ever, besides *ISS Pro '98*. The diversity is incredible. And, because the game's hard, you know you've achieved something when you watch a free kick bend into the top corner, or a volley tear into the old onion bag.

"Did you see that?!"

There are those people who say that, essentially, games today are no better than games of ten years ago. This is quite clearly rubbish. And for unequivocal proof that these people are talking Jimmy Hill, I point to the inclusion of real-time commentary from real-life commentators in today's games. It's great – and only recently made possible.

The commentary in each game reflects the standard of each title perfectly: *Libero Grande* has no commentary at all; *FIFA* has John Motson, a bizarrely high-pitched Mark Lawrenson (obviously following a nasty industrial accident), and a monotone Gary Lineker, who's patently holding out



THE PASS MASTER



Spectacular goals come thick and fast in *Actua Soccer 3* – you can tell the designers love football.



Actua Soccer 3

■ Publisher: Gremlin ■ Developer: Gremlin
■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: on sale now
■ Players: 1-2

You won't score more spectacular goals than when you're wearing a virtual *Actua Soccer 3* jersey. But is this enough?

Gremlin's *Actua Soccer* games have always been a gloriously fluid experience. Passes are strung together with ease. Counter attack follows counter attack. Goals are scored from every angle – and what goals they are! They're definitely the most spectacular of the bunch. With aftertouch so easy to apply, watching replays to the accompaniment of Barry Davies is a bit special.

This third installment of the series offers more of the same. There are slight tweaks here and there but nothing too prominent. It's *Actua* as *Actua* always is: perfectly playable, never too taxing, but capable of special goals and created by people who love the game to death. You can tell. Play can be spread with long balls, or started from your own penalty area with a series of short passes. You can score lots of goals, but none of them will be too easy. There's no simple way to slot one home like in *FIFA 99*. And when the passing and shooting is as confident, precise and varied as this, why would you want to?

If there's one fault, it's that there's not enough to discover. There's not the sheer weight of extra moves like there is in *ISS Pro '98* or *World League Soccer*. Which means play often feels boxed-in. As if, once you've reached a certain standard in the game, you simply can't go any further. This is a shame, because otherwise it's a consistently pleasing football game.

CREATED BY PEOPLE WHO LOVE THE GAME OF FOOTBALL TO DEATH

↑ Uppers & Downers

Barry Davies

- The home of the world's most stunning goals
- Crisp passing that – shock! – reacts to the surfaces
- "Big" Barry Davies' expert commentary
- Top replays nicked straight from Sky TV

Barry Bethel

- Lack of moves means possible lack of longevity
- Animation, in places, is a bit crap, to be honest

Group Test

THE BOY DONE GOOD

Arcade
PlayStation
Game of
the Month



CROATIA

In the normal scheme of things, the game with the big name on the box has something to hide. Not in this case – *Michael Owen's WLS '99* is a class act.



Uppers & Downers

Mikey

- Tons of different moves
- Masses of variation in goals
- A huge database of teams and players
- Passionate for the game
- Free-flowing passing and supple analogue control

Crikey

- Visually disappointing

Michael Owen's World League Soccer '98

Publisher: Eidos ■ Developer: Silicon Dreams
Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: on sale now
Players: 1-2

And so the final contender enters the fray. It's got a nice big picture of the Wonder Boy™ Owen on the box, so it's got to be pretty incredible, right?

Okay, let's get the bad bits out of the way first: *WLS '99* looks average. The presentation is frighteningly poor, while you can only presume the motion-capture for the animation was created at a retirement village. The players appear to "skate" across the surfaces, and when they trip they look like they're about to collapse with heart seizure. Apart from these obvious visual hindrances, however, *World League Soccer '99* – Michael Owen or not – plays a blinder. What's most staggering is the sheer amount of things to learn. Besides *ISS Pro '98*, there's never been a game that's

THERE'S NEVER BEEN A GAME THAT'S GRASPED THE INTRICACIES OF FOOTBALL SO WELL

grasped the intricacies of football so well: the back post header is as much at home in *WLS '99* as the half-volley, while there's just as much chance to shimmy past opponents as there is to launch a pin-point 40-yard pass. Press and hold R1 or R2 and an action button and you access a whole new inventory too. These combos provide the most of the sexy stuff – the nutmegs and overhead kicks, the stooping headers and volleys.

And the game never lets you score simply. You've got to earn the right to bury one from 12 yards. And that means you've got to use every part of the game to outfox opponents. Just as you should have to. Professional football isn't easy (just ask anyone from Southampton) so why should console football be? And *World League Soccer '99* is as close to the real thing as you'll ever get.

for the pay check; *Actua* has the otherwise brilliant Barry Davies, occasionally chopped off half way through a sentence; and *WLS '99* has Peter Brackley and Ray Wilkins. Not the most flashy pairing maybe, but their commentary is superb, free of repeats and it flows astonishingly well throughout the game. Which sums up *WLS '99*: not the biggest name, but far and away the best of the bunch.

At the end of the day

So where does all this leave us? *Libero Grande* was never going to be a serious contender, and is clearly the Blackburn Rovers of the group. *Actua Soccer 3* is still extremely good, but not quite the name it once was. The battle was always going to be between the other two games and, while *FIFA 99* has all the style, *World League Soccer '99* has all the substance. It's made by football fans for football fans. Just like Michael Owen, it's refreshing, exciting and abundantly gifted. Get it in.

Tim Weaver

FINAL SCORE

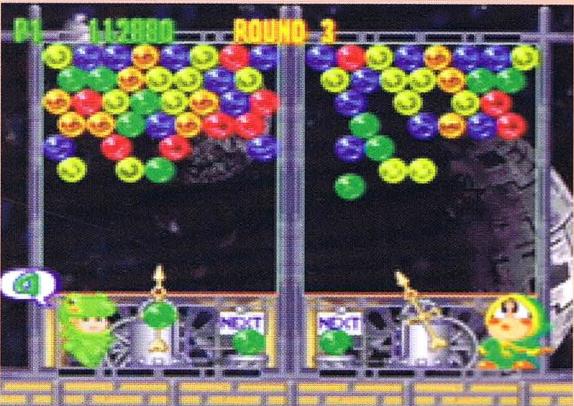


■ So which of our four new PlayStation games goes home with three points?

	FIFA 99	Libero Grande	Actua Soccer 3	WLS '99
■ Teams (number available)	★★★★★ (293)	★ (32)	★★★★ (184)	★★★ (144)
■ Choice of leagues (number available)	★★★★★ (12)	N/A	★★★ (8)	★★★★ (9)
■ Goal scoring	★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★
■ Passing	★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★
■ Moves	★★★★	★★	★★★	★★★★★
■ Overall	★★★	★★	★★★★	★★★★★

MOVE IT!

BUBBLES BEWARE! B & B ARE BACK



The likes of Mario might get all the glory, but Bub 'n' Bob are actually right up there with the most successful game characters of all time. The campaign for recognition starts now!



Bust-A-Move 4

Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment
Developer: Taito
Price: £39.99
Release date: January
Players: 1-2

Extension of the puzzling series which provides further chances to eschew sleep in favour of bursting bubbles.

Twin brothers Bubblen and Bobblen hail from the planet BubbleLuna, a happy and peaceful place. Or it was, until the Fairy of the Night – under instruction from Madame Full Moon – stole their rainbow light source. Bub and Bob have vowed to retrieve their rainbow, but knowing what little trouble-seekers they are, Madame Luna has split the light source into seven coloured bubbles and sent them flying to different corners of the universe.



And you thought *Bust-A-Move*, a brilliantly simple puzzle game dubbed the upside-down *Tetris*, didn't have a plot. In fact, there's a complex back story, stretching through previous *Bust-A-Moves* and older classics like *Rainbow Islands* and the original *Bubble Bobble*, all starring teeny dinosaur twins Bub 'n' Bob (though they were small boys in *Rainbow Islands*, for reasons that escape me now), and all of them ludicrously addictive. All you need know for now, though, is that those bubbles need bursting – and quick.

Essentially, *Bust-A-Move 4* is the same as *Bust-A-Moves 1, 2 and 3*. Fire your bubble-cannon at a mass of bubbles attached to the ceiling of your 2D environment and when three of the same colour are connected, they will pop and fall to the floor, bringing any stragglers with them. The aim is to rid the screen of bubbly presence, although the mass will slowly advance, *Space Invaders*-style, towards the ground. If the mass reaches the floor, you've blown it. The two-player split-screen mode is doubly vicious as your

success is mirrored by bubble build-up on your opponent's side. Rack up a combo by making use of the all-new bubble-link feature and your mate's screen lathers, provoking language as colourful as the bubbles themselves.

Clearly *Bust-A-Move 4* isn't really worth buying if you own one of its predecessors, but the latest incarnation is certainly an

improvement as far as colour and game options go. If you choose the story mode and join Bubblen and Bobblen in their quest for the lost rainbow, you'll encounter a few new variations on the theme, including balanced pulleys and bubbles with unusual properties. You also have a choice of eight manic characters, each with their own ridiculous celebration chant, including Grrr the sunbathing baby, Tam Tam the warrior and G, an old man who's fond of tea. It's simple and silly, but *Bust-A-Move 4* is ultimately more enjoyable and enduring than all those po-faced adventure games we're currently suffering. Viva BubbleLuna. ★★★★

Sam Richards

Or you could try...

Bust-A-Move 2
Action Entertainment ****
An earlier, scratchier version, but at a budget price, you can't argue.

Super Puzzle Fighter 2
Vivid *****
Street Fighter kids involved in puzzle-tile you-drop malarkey.



Constructor

Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment
Developer: System 3
Price: £39.99
Release date: on sale now
Players: 1 Extras: Mouse, memory card (free with game)

The PlayStation comes over all *Auf Wiedersehen Pet*. Fortunately Geordies with bent noses and dubious solo albums appear absent.

"Oooh, don't like the look of that guy, gonna need a couple extra bodies on this, you're talking a monkey at least." Such goes the battle cry of the unscrupulous builder. A schister. A cowboy. Call 'em what you will, theirs is a life of dirty dealing, upped prices and knock-off materials. It's always been a dangerous world to dabble in. Until now.

Constructor drops you right into this bricks-and-mortar world and lets you go, very much, to town. Your job is to build yourself an empire. But where *Constructor* differs from previous titles of this nature (such as the great *Sim City*) is that this sortie into settlements is more personal. Mob members, hippies, psychopaths, rival workers – the list of folk you'll have to deal with is long and unpleasant. But it's your job to keep the problems caused by these reprobates to a minimum. When it suits you.

You first churn out wooden houses. Then begins the battle to shuffle your dudes, equipment, factories and the like to create better abodes for your tenants. Tenants provide money, which assists growth. Cheaper housing, though, attracts cheap types, who bring trouble. More money means better houses which attract the cream of society. Then you've got to consider breeding tenants, dogs, violent residents, a police force, hospitals – it's a nightmare.

Graphically *Constructor* is fun, but very standard. Aurally it's not exactly spin-off CD material. But these are irrelevancies. The play of the title, and its complexities, are the things that will drag you back time and time again. It's a deep, involving game, in a vibrant, fun package. And getting "stung" while you're playing this is a lot less painful than in the real world. ★★★★

Stephen Pierce





Small Soldiers

■ Publisher: Electronic Arts
■ Developer: Dreamworks
■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-2
■ Extras: Memory card, Dual Shock

These particular soldiers are as blessed in entertainment value as they are in stature.

■ First there was *Small Soldiers* the film, which you may or may not have seen. It doesn't matter. Why? Because for some strange reason the back-story of *Small Soldiers*, the game, has virtually nothing to do with the plot of the movie. All that the two have in common are the titular wee warriors and their enemies, the equally dwarfish Gorgonites.

In the one-player game you play Archer, the troll-like leader of the repulsive Gorgonites (in case you were in the dark, the more human-looking action figures are actually the baddies). The game is mostly running about, exploring, collecting colourful objects and mowing down *Small Soldiers* in 3D, and in the opening levels this is a surprisingly effective formula. Set in grimy, foreboding caves, your character is reasonably well animated; he responds accurately to your commands and develops an easily accessible armoury. So far, so good. The problem is, that's more or less your lot. Each level demands the same procedure. Find the coloured thing, take it to the stone thing and get the key thing. Repeat til fade.

There are some lovely graphics – when Archer is tossed skyward by blue fizzing gas the camera follows his undulations perfectly. The problem is that, ultimately, the things *Small Soldiers* demands from you are far too familiar and formulaic. It's the same old, same old, with just a tad more same old stapled on for good measure.

There's a deathmatch affair thrown into the mix, too, but here, also, *Small Soldiers* disappoints. Yes, these men are supposed to be tiny, but do they have to be quite so damn miniature? It soon becomes obvious how arbitrary the likelihood of bumping into your foe is. And when you do finally run into them, the whole scene dissolves into a face-off with both players hammering fire until one drops.

Initially this looked like a title to break the run of predictable movie tie-in games. But no, this is as bad as the rest. Perhaps worse, for the basic concept (with its size theme and colourful characters) had so much obvious potential.

★★ Stephen Pierce



■ Welcome to the end of the world. Squint hard and you might just see Bruce Willis.

LAST MAN STANDING

THE BIBLICAL FOURSOME TAKE ON HOLLYWOOD'S FINEST

Apocalypse

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Neversoft ■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1 ■ Extras: Memory card

Bruce Willis has been moonlighting for Activision. But is this platform shooter a case of *Die Hard* – or try harder?

Uppers & Downers
Millennium <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Provides lots of challenge■ Well paced■ Good learning curve■ Bruce Willis...
End of the world <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ ... for a few seconds■ Very confusing controls and a tricky camera



■ It's moody alright, but the camera causes a lot of confusion.

Activision's futuristic platform shoot-'em-up *Apocalypsis*, will no doubt command much attention, for the notable reason that it contains the voice of Bruce Willis. But then so did *Look Who's Talking Too*.

Predictably Willis takes the part of a gobby renegade. You play him as Trey Kincaide, out to save the world from the four horsemen of the Apocalypse – Death, War, Plague and Beast (not the line-up we remember, but there you go). His videogame experiences, though limited, extend to some motion capture work and a bunch of voice sampling. Indeed, once past the excellent FMV intro, it's easy to forget that Willis is involved at all, for this is largely a sprite-style romp, with rendered backgrounds that take you through sewers, prisons and other suitably dark locations. If you do spot the Willis mug pasted onto your character, it has the eerie comic feel of a Vic and Bob gag involving cardboard faces stuck on at skewed angles. As for the voice-overs, the clever-dick quips soon become annoying. Hearing, "These guys need a little more lead in their diet", can be wearing after the 27th time, especially when you're using a flame-thrower.

So surely with the Willis role shot down in flames, the game must be dead in the water? Actually no, because developer Neversoft has taken the trouble to come up with a sound gameplay framework. *Apocalypsis* is very like *Loaded*, and though more linear than Gremlin's bloodfest it's more engaging and challenging too. Think *Tunnel B1* meets *Fade to Black* meets *Crash Bandicoot*, or *Pandemonium* with guns.

Playing across huge levels (with plenty of restart points and power ups), you blast your way through progressively harder scenarios. There are tasks to perform, but these are as simple as flicking switches or killing enemies. Nevertheless, a relentless pace keeps you interested, and a good learning curve keeps you coming back for more.

Where the game becomes exasperating is in its control system. Mostly you push forward for Bruce to run forward; at times, though, the camera switches around and now you have to push, say, down-and-left to go the same way. It forces you to change your mind set, and risks losing the intuitive feel you've built up. And though you can run out of the screen to shoot enemies you've missed, you can't actually see them when you do so. Such limiting controls seem linked to the fact that the camera angles change automatically as you play. It makes the whole thing difficult more out of defects than gameplay intentions – a real shame.

We wouldn't suggest you definitely buy *Apocalypsis*, but a sequel could be interesting. If Activision tries harder. ★★ Rob Pegley

Or you could try...

Loaded
Gremlin Interactive ★★
Now out on Platinum, this sees you heading round simplistic mazes but it comes with a lack of variety that limits its long-term playability.

GLORY BOX

BIG MEN. BIG GLOVES. BIG GAME?



Knockout Kings

■ Publisher: Electronic Arts ■ Developer: Electronic Arts ■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: out now
■ Players: 1-2

Following hot in the boot prints of *FIFA 99*, EA Sports swaps shorts for trunks and takes on the noble bloodbath that is boxing. Round One...

For some, boxing is a exquisite dance of passion and fury. It's Norman Mailer. It's The Thriller In Manilla. It's sport at its most inherently and excitingly primal. For others, it's two fat bastards trying to batter seven shades of shit out of each other. Which corner you choose to fight from is up to you, but matched against the likes of *Tekken* or *Quake*, boxing is the videogame equivalent of a poetry slam between your mum and the ugly girl out of *Placebo*.

Just as well, then, that *Knockout Kings* is no beat-'em-up. Yup, there're cuts,

Uppers & Downers

Floats like a butterfly

- Tactics and violence
- Realism a-go-go
- Muhammad Ali!

Floats like a buffalo

- Not for beat-'em-up fans
- Sluggish slugging
- Few British fighters

bruises and the inevitable dollop of blood, but if you're looking for combo-happy ultraviolence, then you'd best shop elsewhere. See, *Knockout Kings* is a boxing sim – you're going to have to think before you punch. A flurry of jabs and uppercuts might sound like the best way to get a knockout,

but as each punch wanes in effectiveness (your Power Meter temporarily decreases after each one) and your opponent lands telling jabs, you'll soon find yourself on the wrong side of a mandatory eight count.

Thus it's as vital to block and clinch as it is to throw haymakers. It's not so important in the Slugfest option (three rounds, illegal blows, much pain), but in Exhibition mode, stamina is all. You get ten rounds of ultra-realistic pugilism, and it's here that EA has excelled itself. Boasting motion-captured animation and smooth gourard-shading, there're 38 fighters to choose from. Evander Holyfield, Roberto Duran, Rocky Marciano and Muhammad Ali are all up for grabs and it's even possible to recreate legendary bouts between Marvin Hagler and Sugar Ray Leonard. Reach, weight and endurance are all faithfully recreated, and as Round Nine approaches and your deft footwork has reserved enough stamina to plant a jaw-crunching uppercut, it's this mode you'll return to every time.

For the more aspirationally minded, *Knockout Kings'* Career mode enables you to build your own über-fighter – cue humourous facial hair and neon trunks – and claw your way through the ranks from chump to champ. That means both training and meeting increasingly-tougher opponents (and plenty of Memory Card action), but with the prospect of fighting Muhammad Ali in a virtual Madison Square Gardens, the rewards are obvious and give *Knockout Kings* the depth and longevity required to bolster its more basic appeal.

Tactics, thrills plus a Dual Force compatibility that will have you rumbling in the jungle of your living room – *Knockout Kings* is the most realistic representation of boxing to hit the PSX yet. Granted, no videogame could ever capture

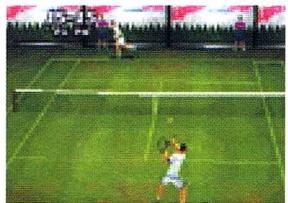
the epiphany that is being hit in the face by a homicidal maniac, but if this step into the ring is anything to go by, expect EA to develop a VR body suit for the release of *Kings 2*. After you with the Deep Heat...

★★★ Mike Goldsmith

Or you could try...

Victory Boxing 2
JVC ****
Realistic slug sim – beats *Knockout Kings* on speed, but can't match its depth.

Tekken 3
SEGA ****
Who needs uppercuts when you can have Megaton Punches and Hands of Doom?



All Star Tennis '99

■ Publisher: Ubisoft ■ Developer: Smart Dog ■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-4

Packed with sweat bands and disturbing grunts, PlayStation gamers have finally been served the real thing. You can forget all about *Smash Court*.

Sports sims on the PlayStation. You think football, you think ice hockey, you think basketball. You don't think tennis. And yet one of the most addictive PlayStation games of all was *Smash Court Tennis*. Notice the "was" – with Sony's decision to discontinue PlayStation's answer to the SNES' wonderful *Super Tennis*, there's a gap in the market for another (hem hem) "smashing" tennis sim.

All Star Tennis '99 is hardly a *Smash Court* clone though, as Ubisoft has been at great pains to make its game much more realistic. The real-life likes of Mark Philippoussis and Michael Chang are among eight tennis pros who strut their polygonal stuff.

The array of shots you can pull off is satisfyingly true to life, the action is fast and, importantly, you can win points through good shot selection rather than just relying on the errors of your opponents. It's very surprising how often the reverse is true in tennis sims.

In fact, it's enough to make *All Star Tennis '99* the best PSX tennis sim around. Sadly, considering the competition, that's not saying much, and it still falls well short of being a genuine classic. Hitting the ball as wide as you can causes all sorts of problems, for a start – the camera angle isn't wide enough to show where it's going, so that you're forced into running as far as you can to the left or right in the hope that you'll hit the ball.

It's a good job that the nature of tennis games means that they work better as a two-player, or even four-player, experience, too. The one-player mode just pits you against some impossibly difficult-to-beat computer characters and swiftly becomes irritating rather than challenging.

Still, if you like playing tennis on the PSX, this is the place to be. Irritation and lack of atmosphere are more than outweighed by the realistic gameplay and beautifully smooth presentation, while the entertaining "bomb" tennis mode (where a mine is laid every time the ball bounces) is a laugh-and-a-half, and completely unexpected. *Smash Court* may be dead, but its weird and wonderful legacy clearly lives on. ★★★ Ben East



NBA Live 99

■ Publisher: EA Sports
■ Developer: EA Sports
■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-8 (with multi-tap)

The latest and greatest NBA game, catering equally for the slam-dunk statto and the alley-oop ignoramus.

You've floored an opponent, wrestled the ball from his sweaty hands and are advancing towards the basket. A reverse dribble and you're past the defender, leaping five feet into the air and slamming the ball defiantly through the hoop. "That's a monster jam!" screams the commentator, as you salute the crowd. This isn't basketball as we know it. No, this is *NBA Live 99*'s no rules observed (of physics or otherwise) Arcade Mode, enjoyable even if you find the sport itself deadly tedious.

Of course, you can always trust EA Sports to put on a show and *NBA Live 99*'s presentation is impeccable. Using the very latest motion capture technology (with model provided by Boston Celtics' Antoine Walker) means that the players, although still a little blocky, move more smoothly than ever before and all their warm-up and celebration moves are realistic. Close-up camera angles also reveal the players' gurning faces as they strain to block shots or layup for the basket.

Basketball purists horrified by the crazy Arcade mode should be appeased by the Simulation mode, replete with a staggering number of tactical set plays. These are all explained on a moving blackboard and can be actioned or changed at any time. Guide your chosen team through not just one season, but a decade of play, making all the selection and transfer decisions in the manner of a simplified management sim. And if you're a statto geek, you'll be steaming in ecstasy when you realise the detail in which every damn player from the 29 NBA teams has been catalogued.

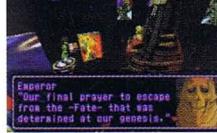
NBA Live 99 is also home to the funniest player creation option around. Assemble your own stats for a rookie player, condemn him to a life with a mullet and grey pointy sideburns, and then watch him as he rises like the sun up the rankings.

Back on the Arcade mode court, fun with your alley-oops, reverse layups and downtown threes is immediate but enduring. You can even imagine Dennis Rodman abandoning his drink to come play. ★★★★ Chas Davies

IMPORT



■ It's gorgeous, it's involving, it's got bloody big robots. Hurrah!



■ Lin's life story soon becomes a fascinating tale.

TOP GEARS

WHO WANTS TO SEE BIG ROBOTS FIGHTING?

Xenogears

■ Publisher: EA/Square ■ Developer: Squaresoft ■ Price: TBC ■ Release date (USA): on sale now (available from NextGen on 0181 339 0666) ■ Release date (UK): none ■ Players: 1

If you thought that Square exhausted its creative talents with the near-perfect *Final Fantasy VII*, be prepared for a shock.

Ever since *Final Fantasy VII*, gamers who are usually only satisfied when blowing alien heads off have been eagerly awaiting the sequel to Square's wondrous RPG. Luckily, Square doesn't restrict itself to one great game every two years (a practise known as "pulling a Nintendo"), and it has delivered once again with *Xenogears*, which – in some ways – is even better than the great *FF*.

The plot is as head-scratchingly complicated as we've come to expect from Japanese RPGs. You guide Fei, a young man who lives (for the first half-hour of the game) in the little village of Lehan. Fei was abandoned as a child and is troubled by nightmarish visions of his forgotten past, and so the stage is set for a twisty-turny story of self-discovery, heart-ache and – best of all – gob-smackingly gorgeous robot battles.

Xenogear's between-fight sections are, essentially, what's expected in a post-*FFVII* gaming world. Fei walks about, buys stuff, sells stuff and talks to characters, some of whom join his party to help in later combat. The worlds, including towns, deserts, caves and forests, are rendered in fully rotatable real-

time 3D, and often top *FFVII*'s pre-rendered environments in detailed and atmosphere.

Before long, though, a battle ensues, and the real fun begins. Unlike most RPGs, Fei isn't restricted to one attack per "turn", enabling you to pull together a fighting game-style combo of kicks and punches. Although magic has less of a starring role than in *Final Fantasy*, Fei's abilities grow with experience, giving you an impressive inventory of fiery, sparkly attacks.

But it's the Gears themselves – humongous robotic blokes that characters climb into and control – that supply the most jaw-dropping battles. If you're a fan of big bangs and flashy lights you can gorge yourself on the range of over-the-top moves and special effects that these out-sized Transformer lookalikes supply. Frying a group of puny humans with a 60ft wall of fire is an experience to be treasured.

While *Xenogear's* battles supply the short-term adrenaline rush, the story – which we won't spoil for you here – makes sure you're gripped through til dinnertime. The real-time set pieces and anime segments are guaranteed to have you staring at the TV til you develop cataracts. They're almost too plentiful, but then who cares when the story's so good?

So, where's the catch? It's in the fact that Square has no plans to bring *Xenogears* to Europe. By advising you to buy the import version and chip your PlayStation so that you can play it, we would, of course, be acting highly irresponsibly. But, oh... you know? Better than *Final Fantasy VII*... big robots fighting... you catch our drift! ★★★★

Mark Green

Uppers & Downers

Fifth Gear

- Hugely absorbing story
- Involving fight sequences
- Hours and hours of gameplay

Reverse

- Unwieldy camera
- A few too many cut-scenes
- Only out in America and Japan. Gah!

Or you could try...

Final Fantasy VII
Squaresoft ★★★★
Except that you've probably already got it.

Megaman Legends
Virgin Interactive Entertainment ★★★
If you like less story and a lot more shooting, you could do worse than this.



Tomb Raider III

■ Publisher: EIDOS Interactive
■ Developer: Core ■ Price: £44.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1

The third Tomb Raider in as many years sees Lara at the peak of her powers and as gorgeous on PlayStation as she is on the PC.

■ It's felt like a very long time coming. There's been half a year of unmissable hype. Countless variations on the sophisticated "breasts" puns. The completely uncalled-for Marks and Sparks Lara pants tie-in. *Tomb Raider III* still manages to justify all these efforts by being bloody brilliant, as we told you at greater length in Arcade 1's review of the near-identical PC version.

As you'd expect, Lara in her latest PlayStation outing isn't quite as graphically gorgeous as she appears to be if you're playing the 3D accelerated PC game, but to be fair, she's never looked better on Sony's PSX. And the shift to hi-res makes for levels so stunning that you'll want to get to the next one simply to gasp at the view.

You do need to watch out for a ham-fisted, PlayStation-only attempt at enabling you to guide Lara using the analogue Dual Shock controller, though which transfers the familiar leaps and side-steps on to the thumb sticks. Unlike *Mario 64*, the game wasn't written for this kind of input, so you're much better off sticking with the more familiar hard-but-fair D-Pad imprecision.

These small differences aside, the PlayStation version's ingenious levels match those on the PC right down to their scary placement of ravenous endangered species. Perhaps most importantly, the constantly teetering balance that's achieved between puzzles and action is still ever present, making *TR III* fizz along like a lit fuse, despite being the toughest *Tomb Raider* by a comfortable margin. Ultimately, this is Lara's greatest adventure yet. On this form you could forgive her just about anything – even if you do get bought the pants for Christmas.

★★★★★ **Robin Alway**



Invasion

■ Publisher: Micros ■ Developer: Micros ■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1

Oh my lord, no. It's another of those run-of-the-mill flight blasters in which you have to protect the world from an alien invasion (yawn). It is French, though.

■ Search wherever you like in the world and you'd be hard pressed to find an original videogame idea these days. Most of the successful releases take a well-established formula (be that racing, sports sim, first-person shooter) and improve upon it, adding new touches, one or two neat ideas and their own individual slant. Some games, however, don't even bother with the individual slant bit. Or the improvement bit, for that matter. And *Invasion* is one of those.

The model here is clearly *Psynopsis' G-Police*, although *Invasion* is such a generic airborne blaster that you should be able to spot elements from a whole host of precursors. You're in control of a plane/chopper/spaceship (it's never made clear) and you receive missions from the command centre, which include intercepting convoys, destroying enemy power stations and battling it out with warships. And you must carry all this out under a constant barrage of hostile fire. You get the picture.

Invasion's landscapes are all reasonably imaginative and you're able to view sections of them in the distance. The oncoming alien ships are smartly drawn and you have a formidable arsenal at your disposal, although while the fire from the various weapons looks impressive, whatever you use, it all has much the same effect.

Micros hasn't even bothered to create you much of a motive for completing the game's blast-based missions; a brief opening sequence mentions an alien invasion in the year 2093 – do stop me if you've heard this one before. Originality was clearly never anywhere near *Invasion's* agenda – we advise you to wait for the release of *G-Police 2* in March. ★★ **Sam Richards**



Psybadek

■ Publisher: Psynopsis ■ Developer: Psynopsis ■ Price: £40 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1

Good friends platforming and snowboarding might have thought that marriage was a good idea, but their friends were whispering disapproval from the start.

■ So if there aren't any truly new ideas, floating around and waiting to be grabbed, it must be a hard life to live as a game designer, constantly having to reach into previously unexplored areas of your brain in search of something that little bit different. But, as in any profession, there're always the lazy ones. And the designer of *Psybadek* must have spent all of 20 seconds coming up with the idea to merge the platforming and snowboarding genres.

Psybadek has all the hallmarks



of a common-or-garden platform game – a 3D environment, stages awash with both platforms and wandering baddies, jungle and Arctic worlds – but the central character is on a hoverboard. So where's all the sex that those subtle-as-a-slap-in-the-face magazine adverts refer to? Just a marketing gimmick, I'm afraid, friends – the central characters in *Psybadek* are all of 13 years old.

The first real problem with *Psybadek* is the difficulty you'll find inherent in controlling that futuristic plank of wood. The board's unresponsiveness prompts the need for God-like turning skills, and the need to use an extra button to climb steep hills is unnecessarily frustrating. In the mean time, the poor old U-turn button is only of use in the boss arenas, and even then it's too unwieldy to use properly.

Psynopsis has exacerbated the board problem by not tailoring the platform-style levels to the main

shortcomings of racing-game controls. Jumping from ledge to ledge is difficult enough with a normal platform character, but try to pull it off with separate left, right, accelerate and decelerate controls, in a slippery ice world – where an instant death is your reward if you fall – and the CD will quickly find itself in the bin.

The level style is varied, but the range of challenges is limited – the mazes to negotiate, slaloms to "dek" down and bosses to throw balls at are all variations on the theme of racing and jumping. The graphics are detailed and colourful, but there's an unhealthy amount of pop-up and the tendency for the ground to turn rainbow-coloured and transparent doesn't help proceedings at all.

The game's biggest problem, though, is that monotony sets in almost before you've begun. The appeal of platform games often lies in the desire to see what's around the next corner, and the feeling of discovery as you find out. *Psybadek* always offers another round of dek-steering or platform-negotiating, and will ultimately give you as much a feeling of discovery as when you find someone else's hair in the bath tub. ★★ **Mark Green**

PlayStation budget round-up

by Robin Alway

It's a bit of a lean month on the cheapo front, what with all the full-price Christmas releases stacking the shelves, but we've still secured a couple of £20 bargains.



V-Rally

■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Infogrames ■ Price: £19.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-2 ■ Extras: Dual Shock-compatible ■ Other formats: N64

Time hasn't been particularly kind to this once challenger for the title of the PlayStation's Best Racer. First *Gran Turismo* (or "that bloody game" as the developers of other racers must surely call it) came along and made any other driving game seem poor by comparison. And then *Colin McRae* did the whole rallying thing in mud-splatteringly realistic fashion.

However, if you don't expect anything as deep as *Turismo* or sim based as Mr McRae there's plenty to enjoy in *V-Rally*. Hemming it around 45 narrow courses in a variety of international locations has a lot going for it, particularly as the excellent weather effects make you feel just like you're in Spain or Scotland.

The ultra-sensitive handling takes a while to get to grips

with, and you'll spend most of your early games upside down, as the merest scuff of a kerb sends you barrel rolling down the track. It's a swear word-inventingly frustrating race – especially as the other drivers aren't above nudging you into a treacherous corner – but the rather steep learning curve does make for a hard-fought feeling of satisfaction when you make it to the finish line without a scrape.

Rather than just sticking *V-Rally* in a new box, Infogrames has included an exclusive car (Toyota Corolla WRC 98, Top Trump fans) for the Platinum re-release and also added Dual Shock vibration; the perfect accompaniment to all the countless crashes.

If you can handle having your driving skills subjected to such car-flipping indignity, then *V-Rally*'s still in the upper echelons of the PlayStation's supremely competitive driving game genre, and well worth sampling at half its original price. ★★★★



The Lost World

■ Publisher: EA Classics ■ Developer: Dreamworks ■ Price: £19.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1

While it might be true that Steven Spielberg has a *Saga Lost World* coin-op in his office, the famously sentimental director would be mad to chuck this console game on his PlayStation of a luncheon. Unless he's showing Jeff Goldblum how dreadful it is.

Where Sega's light-gun shooter told you "Something has survived..." and then gave you the means to gun it down, this Dreamworks-developed tie-in offers a Pandemonium-style pseudo-3D platform approach with little success.

On the positive side, you do get to control dinosaurs as well as humans over the course of five large stages. There's plenty of short-term fun to be had stomping through all the detailed levels as a t-rex, chewing people's heads off to keep up your energy levels.

But although the dinos look every bit as good as you'd

expect from the videogame arm of Spielberg's empire, some unforgivable-in-this-day-and-age platforming errors work to extract most of the enjoyment from *Lost World*. Most heinous are the "leap of faith" bits where you're seriously expected to jump into thin air in the hope that there's an unseen platform to land on. Along with enemies that attack before you see them and some rather more straightforward bugs that have you falling through seemingly solid platforms, this all adds up to a frustratingly difficult and downright unfair experience. Like the film it's based on, *The Lost World's* main achievement is to make you very bored of dinosaurs. Stick a quid in the coin-op version instead to see what you're missing. ★★



New PC Games

Arcade
PC
Game of
the Month

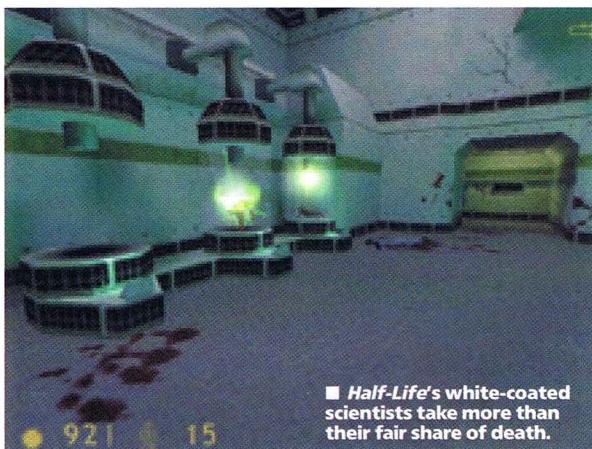


The Gauss gun (above) is an industrial-strength weapon quite capable of downing a chopper more successfully than a B-list celebrity pilot. It also warrants a place in the *Innovations* catalogue – heavy weaponry edition – with its neat “rocket jump” feature, hence the bolt-on fuel canister.



ONCE IN A LIFETIME

SAVE THE WORLD, OR SAVE YOUR SKIN – TIME TO CHOOSE



■ *Half-Life's* white-coated scientists take more than their fair share of death.

Half-Life

■ Publisher: Sierra ■ Developer: Valve ■ Price: £39.99
■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-multi-player
deathmatch ■ Requires: P133, 24Mb RAM, 2x CD-ROM
drive, sound card, Win 95 ■ Recommended: P166, 32Mb
RAM, 3D accelerator card (Open GL or Direct 3D)

The research facility has collapsed, your colleagues have been transformed into alien scum and the military want you dead. Just another day at Black Mesa Research. Watch out for that rip in the space-time continuum on your way to the bathroom...

You can tell at a glance if someone's played *Half-Life*. They have this strange, staring gleam in their eye, the kind of lit-from-within intensity you usually see only in suicide bombers and alien abductees.

They can't stop talking about it, either. Once *Half-Life* has taken hold of them, people who used to converse perfectly rationally can't help but begin their every sentence with the words, "And there's this great bit where..." They clutch you by the shoulders and barrage you with details. "The helicopter chase...", they gibber. "The laser-activated booby-traps. The tie-straightening man."

Try steering the conversation gently towards another subject and these *Half-Life* zealots will nod abstractedly for a while, wait for a moment's pause, and then begin again. "Oh," they'll say, as you tactfully try to inform them of their grandfather's demise, "and there's this great bit where you get to leap on top of a tank and use its heavy machine gun to shred an alien onslaught. Have I mentioned the laser-activated booby-traps?"

And there's this great bit where the lift you've just entered shudders to a halt, and you spend a few silent seconds wondering what to do next, with the car rocking slightly. Then, with a sudden scream of metal, the whole thing plummets 50 feet into a lake of radioactive ooze.

And there's this great bit where you can hear a scientist in the next room talking to a security guard and telling him not to over-charge the experimental weapon he's playing with, and the security guard says, "What do you mean, over-charge?", then there's an enormous explosion, and when you enter the room it's littered with bloody fragments.

You see, I've played it too.

Half-Life is the most important PC title since Quake, and it makes Quake look like rubbish. It makes Quake II look like the work of schoolchildren. It makes *Unreal* look positively amateurish. It makes *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* look like a

dreadful, dreadful joke. *Half-Life* is better, even, than the once best-game-ever: the N64's sublime *GoldenEye 007*.

Half-Life blazes a trail for an entirely new generation of games, where technical achievement is perfectly complemented by a truly original creative vision. Playing it, you feel slightly awed – privileged to witness the creation of a new standard. A new classic.

It is, in the crassest terms, a first-person-perspective 3D-shooter. Technically, it's based on the Quake and Quake II graphical engines, with lots of extra jiggery pokery, unique to developer Valve. But whereas both Quake and Quake II amount to nothing much more than their engines, with a collection of levels added seemingly as an afterthought, *Half-Life* has been conceived on altogether different terms.

To begin with, it creates a perfectly plausible living world. The heavy hand of the level designer is almost invisible as you travel through seamlessly linked environments, dealing with real-world problems. There's no "pick up the glowing blue skull to lower the wall" nonsense here, just a collection of superbly integrated obstacles and challenges.

You can't open that door, with its optical-scanning lock? Then locate and rescue a scientist with the correct security clearance, get them to follow you, and they'll open it for



HALF-LIFE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PC TITLE SINCE QUAKE, AND IT MAKES QUAKE LOOK LIKE RUBBISH

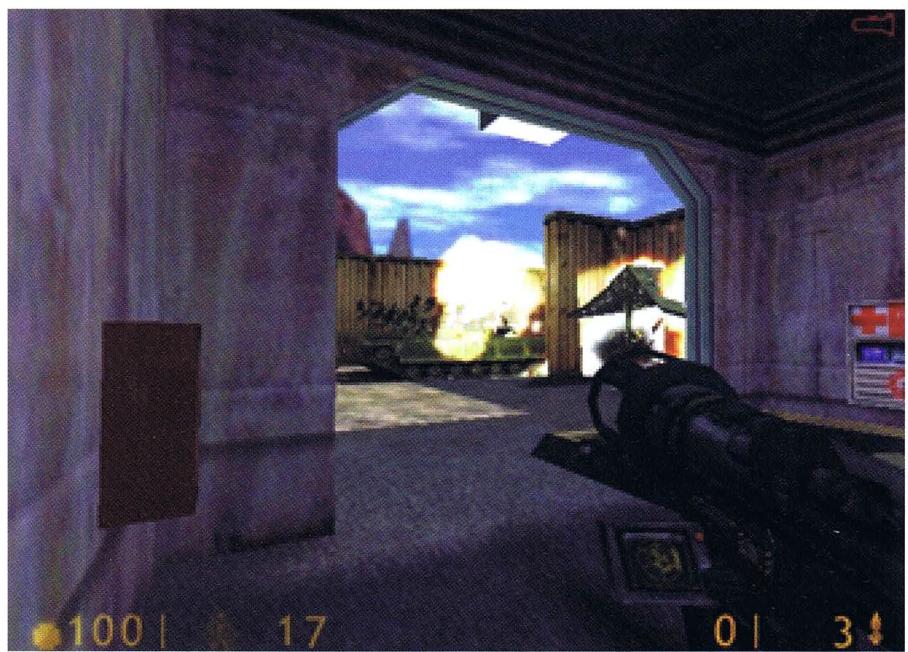


↑ Uppers & Downers

- **Fully cocked**
- Revolutionary step-on from typical Quake-style 3D shooters
- Fantastic, well-thought-through game world
- Scary, with a sense of humour
- More "good bits" than just about any game ever made
- Even better than the N64's *GoldenEye 007*
- **Half cocked**
- Er...



■ The scenery might not be as gloriously plush as *Unreal*'s, but *Half-Life* lets you interact with its in-game environment to a staggering extent. Superb level design often relies on the floors collapsing, grills being prised off walls, and walls which come tumbling down.



■ *Half-Life* succeeds in its mission of scaring the life out of you with none-more-eerie lighting effects and monsters the size of a semi-detached.

you. You can't get past the enormous alien mega-beast? Ah, but once you know that it can only sense by sound, then it's easy enough to distract the creature with a couple of well-aimed hand grenades.

This absorbing world is made more realistic by its lifelike population. Characters go about their business without your intervention, and react to your presence with remarkable intelligence. You'll overhear them having conversations, see them engage in fierce battles and watch as they try – with little success – to rescue each other.

If you ask nicely, some of them will follow you around and even (if armed) help you take on hostile forces. Most, though, simply want to kill you. And they're well-equipped to do so.

All new games claim that their virtual creations have a significant degree of artificial intelligence. Generally speaking, though, this has been hard to discern. But *Half-Life* revolutionises the concept. Although many of your initial encounters are with comically slow-witted foes,

you're soon pitted against the most vigorous enemies ever created.

The government troops, in particular, are works of genius. They look, sound and – crucially – act just as

though they were human. They hide behind walls. They lay down covering fire for each other. Once they've pinned you down, they flush you out of hiding with well-aimed grenades. And, in a brilliant touch, you can hear them communicate with each other over their radios. "Squad – let's go!", comes their battle cry. "Fire in the hold!", they yell, as they flee from a grenade. "Medic!", scream the wounded.

The contribution this behaviour makes to the game's atmosphere and challenge is impossible to over-estimate. You'll sneak up behind a couple of guards and overhear

AROUND EVERY CORNER LIES SOME NEW AND FANTASTIC SIGHT. THERE'S NOT A MOMENT'S SLACK



★★★★★

Jonathan Smith



Or you could try...

Quake
Activision ★★★★
Industry standard first-person shooter still occupying office networks the world over.

Quake II
Activision ★★★★
Superior sequel that maintained Quake's position as a global gaming phenomenon.



■ Gaping maws. *Half-Life's* got them by the shed-load.

them talk about taking revenge for their lost comrades; you'll see soldiers place booby-trap ambushes, or scramble for a better defensive position, or send out reconnaissance teams, and you'll forget that you're playing in a make-believe world. It all seems too real.

And there's plenty more genius still to come. *Half-Life* implements a new model of in-game narrative. At one level, you're absorbed by a magnificent, sweeping plot, packed with extraordinary action set-pieces: the helicopter assault, the tank battle, the garbage crusher, the train crash and so on. At the same time, however, little sub-stories are being told everywhere around you; as you peer through a window at the scientist bravely crushing a brain-eating alien, only to see him ambushed from behind seconds later; or look on in shock as an armoured personnel carrier reverses through a wall, and a platoon of troops spills out to engage in a spectacular fire-fight with fearsome aliens.

And all this is done without a single cut-scene, without a single lapse in the action. Everything, even the opening credit sequence, is created through the game engine; at any time, you can turn your head, run away or open fire. Every move you make is fraught with dramatic tension. Around every corner lies some new and fantastic sight. There's not a moment's slack and there are hundreds of surprises.

In fact, *Half-Life* is almost impossible to fault. It's perfectly paced, endlessly varied, unremittingly exciting and utterly addictive. On a 3D-equipped PC, its special effects are unbeatable. And its multitude of weapons are phenomenally satisfying, from the superb machine gun and combined grenade launcher, through to the excellently implemented crowbar (that you use to smash open crates and break through grates), the laser-sighted rocket launcher and several truly awesome alien devices.

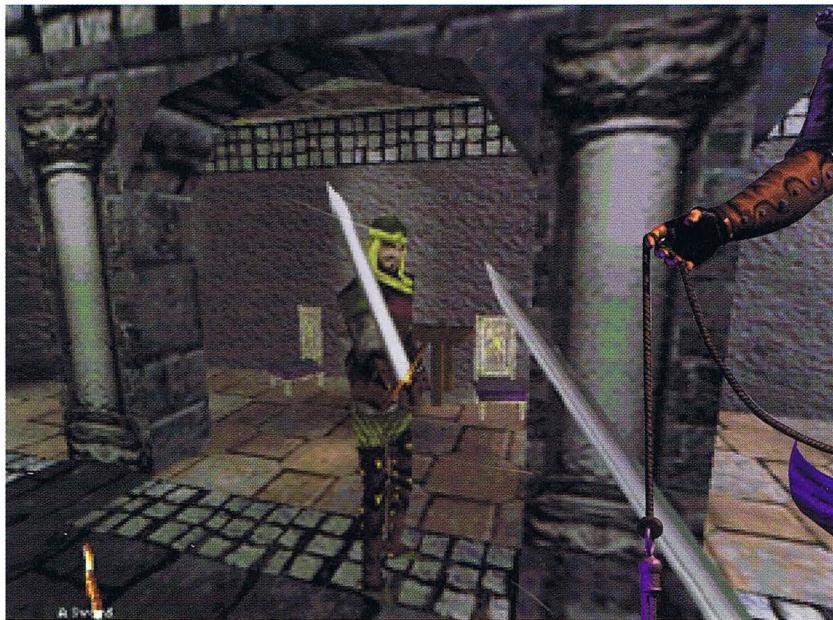
Throughout *Half-Life*, music is used sparingly, but effectively. The puzzles are pitched at the right level of difficulty, and a list of the game's brilliant details would fill this magazine. It's truly scary at times, and even has a great sense of humour, with some wonderful pieces of dramatic timing and genuinely funny lines. The scientist who surveys the carnage of his lab and comments ruefully, "Well, there goes our grant money", is a particularly gifted comedian.

The worst you can say about *Half-Life* is that it would nice if, maybe, the lightsourcing was a little more dynamic, so you could shoot out some lights. Apart from that, it's close to perfect.

In fact, it's like playing all the best bits from all your favourite films.



■ *Thief* is impressive – but only for a while. Then: zzzz.



CASTLE MANIA

METAL GEAR SOLID: YE CLASSIC OLDE WORLDE MODEL

Thief: The Dark Project

■ Publisher: EIDOS Interactive ■ Developer: Looking Glass Studios ■ Price: £44.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1 ■ Requires: P166 ■ Recommended: P266, 64Mb RAM, soundcard

The latest release from the people behind *System Shock* and *Terra Nova*. Except this time round they seem to have forgotten something...

Think about what made *Doom* so great. Was it the brand new 3D engine, which for the first time gave a true first-person perspective on the action? Was it the settings, from the distant moons of Mars through to the eerie underbelly of the Netherworld? Was it the level design – the interweave of corridors, forever disorientating and confusing you? Or was it the weapons and baddies, the killing, the death, the blood?

Mostly, I'd say, it was the simple fact that nothing before had ever made the need to survive and to kill so great. Sure, *Doom*'s successors have better game engines and bigger levels, but it's the ever-deadlier weapons that everybody's really interested in; the different ways you get to kill.

Now imagine the anti-*Doom* – a first person shooter where the idea, perversely, is not to kill anybody. Set it in, say, medieval times, and litter the place with guards in chain mail. You can have a sword, a club and a bow if you really need them, but the idea is to sneak past all the baddies, hide in the shadows and Not Be Seen.

There's more to it than that, but *Thief* is essentially a first-person shooter without the shooting – a sneak-'em-up, as we're learning to call them, for this is yet another

example of that newest of genres, best exemplified by the PlayStation game, *Metal Gear Solid*. For those who loved *Doom*, *Quake* et al, all this shifty, hiding stuff can come as a bit of a culture shock, but you can't deny that *Thief* is a quality work offering some interesting gameplay elements. If you mow down a guard, you need to pick up his corpse and hide it out of view, so as not to attract the attention of his buddies. Sound plays a part, too – listen for soldiers talking; when you hear them, use a different route.

Thief's levels are well designed, the missions specific and the game engine detailed enough to make it believable, but I can't quite shake this niggling feeling that somehow it's all a bit silly. Sure, for a while, it's intriguing. You have to make sure you stick to the dark areas and keep out of the light, fair enough. You fire water arrows to put out torches. Fine, clever stuff, but after a while it all becomes a tad, well... boring. Imagine going to play Laser Quest with your mates. What would be the most fun? Running around trying to blow each other's brains out, or sneaking about, hiding from everyone else?

Thief has other snags, too. If you were actually trying to sneak around a castle, you wouldn't do it wearing blinkers, but the nature of the first-person game engine gives *Thief* just this impression. Of course, you can rotate your view with your mouse, but while you're busy scouting for bad guys, three of them might charge from behind and slay you. *Thief* tries to be realistic, but this means that if you're attacked by more than one person, you'll lose.

Stick at *Thief* and you'll find a strongish game, but a slow one. Go for *Half-Life* instead. ★★★ Rich Pelley A

Or you could try...

GT Interactive ****
In your face, with guns, gore and monsters.
What do you mean, you haven't tried it?

Upsilon
GT Interactive ****
Guns, gore and atmosphere – and intelligent
characters add to the gut-churning mix.

■ Can it be right? Can the sneak-'em-up backlash have started already? Reckon so...

YOU CAN'T DENY THAT THIEF IS A QUALITY WORK, OFFERING SOME INTERESTING GAMEPLAY ELEMENTS

↑ Uppers & ↓ Downers

Tea-leaf
■ Detailed engine
■ Atmospheric
■ Gentle learning curve
Security Camera
■ Boring
gameplay
■ Poor combat



LET'S DANCE

ADVENTURE GAMES DON'T GET MUCH MORE NEAR-THE-KNUCKLE THAN THIS...

Uppers & Downers

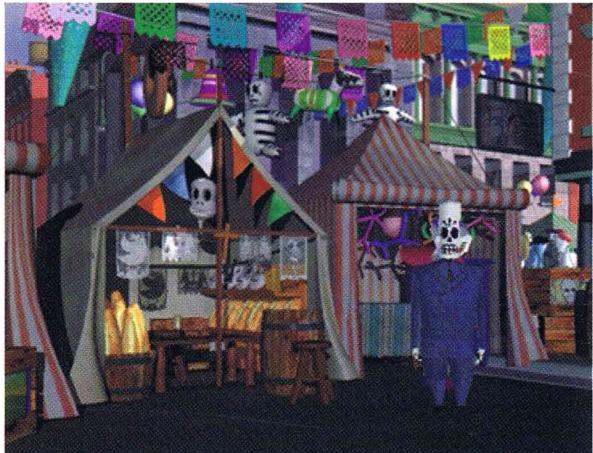
Bones
■ It looks absolutely great
■ And it's laugh-out-loud funny
Cojones
■ Necessarily slow-paced
■ Some tired puzzles
■ And that's really about it...

Grim Fandango

■ Publisher: LucasArts ■ Developer: LucasArts
■ Price: £40.00 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1
■ Requires: P133, 32Mb RAM, 100Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive, sound card, Win 95 ■ Recommended: 3D accelerator card, joystick or joypad

So you thought adventure games were slow and boring, eh? Well, here comes LucasArts, doing what it does best – making you see things differently, in its latest, expertly presented package.

LucasArts, it seems, can do no wrong. Blessed with the holy grail of all game licences – Star Wars, naturally – the company's back catalogue of games is stuffed to the gills with gem-studded hits. X-wing Vs TIE Fighter, Jedi Knight and the upcoming X-wing Alliance; they are all textbook examples of how to "do" games properly. And it's to some large extent the Star Wars axis

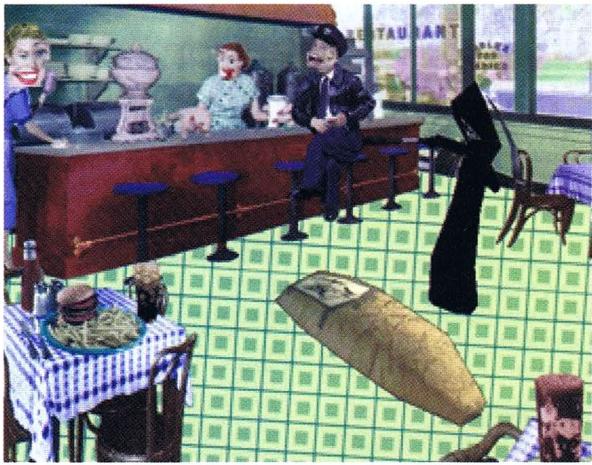


■ Oh, look. You've just missed the joke about Robert Frost.

that has earned the company such critical and commercial acclaim. And yet, there's another game genre – one not at all involved with lightsabres and Wookies – that LucasArts can justifiably claim to be master at, and that's the point-and-click adventure game. A quick roll-call of past triumphs includes such luminaries as *Full Throttle*, *Sam and Max Hit the Road* and the *Monkey Island* series. Witty, lively and almost always slightly surreal, they're each and every one a compelling advertisement for a genre that LucasArts has more or less made its own.

So, then: *Grim Fandango*. It's an adventure game. It's by LucasArts. And it's absolutely bloody brilliant.

The reasons for this are manifest, but in the interests of objectivity and at least a little criticism, you'd have to say that innovation isn't one of them. Mining a rich seam of tradition that's changed little over the years, the nuts and bolts of the game rely on some very familiar point-and-click mechanics. You can examine items in your environment, use them and add them into your inventory, and you can speak to characters, but that's about it. Where *Grim Fandango*





■ Just see these pictures. Wallow in their loveliness. Be amazed.

leaves the past behind, though, is in its presentation and content – this is better than *Monkey Island*, better than *Sam and Max Hit the Road*. We would go so far as to say that never before have graphics, story and humour been married into such a toweringly imaginative, inventive and laugh-out-loud package.

The plot is suitably outlandish. Taking its immediate visual cues from film noir and the Mexican "Day of the Dead" iconography, most of the characters in the game are, it has to be said, a little skeletal. You play one such unfortunate called Manny Calavera, a travel guide for the hereafter, whose job is to ferry newly-arrived souls through their purgatory in the underworld. In a crafty homage to *Glengarry Glen Ross*, your sales-heavy job is being undercut by an unscrupulous rival. This forms the basis of an epic conspiracy that spans two discs and four years, and it's all realised in three glorious dimensions.

The design of the characters and their heavily stylised environments are never less than impeccable. Manny himself is introduced in full traditional Grim Reaper garb (hood, cloak and scythe), as he interviews a client. Post-meeting, he wanders into his office, shrugs off the cloak and kicks off his hydraulic stilts (for imposing height, natch) to reveal a cheap blue suit. Manny's personal driver, a huge orange demon (named Glottis), is a particular triumph of character design. Fantastically animated, he lays claim to being one of the most entertaining game characters ever.

But throughout, *Grim Fandango*'s attention to detail is astounding. Skeletal pigeons flutter away in the background, Manny's head turns to look if there's anything potentially useful around and shadows are cast. The whole thing is simply a joy to watch. So much so, in fact, that any significant others in your life are soon going to feel a little under-appreciated.

And the gameplay more than lives up to the visuals. The dialogue system – which offers you a selection of questions to ask, and responses to give – mixes up general information-gathering inquiries with hysterical asides. At one point, you'll encounter a skeletal clown making balloon animals – when asked if he can make a cat, he responds indignantly that he's so good, he can make a famous poet. Naturally, you're given the option of asking him to do Robert Frost. Who he then does. It's probably more entertaining on the screen than in print, but it sums up *Grim Fandango*'s humour perfectly: a little absurd, a little surreal and it makes you feel like the cleverest man on Earth when you get the joke.

Grim Fandango, then, comes wholeheartedly recommended. It's a trip in every sense of the word – engrossing, epic, funny and, simply, exquisite. It may not feature dinosaurs, rocket launchers or even nuclear air strikes, but, in this one instance, you won't really miss them. Play this game.

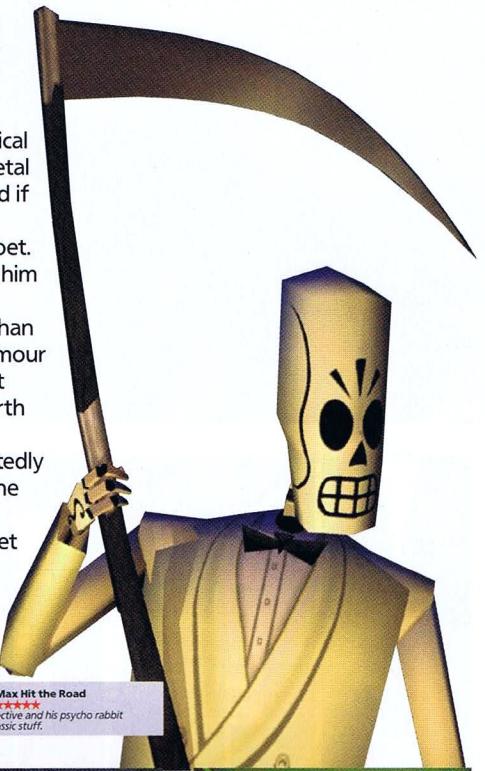
★★★★★

Jes Bickham A

Or you could try...

Monkey Island
LucasArts ★★★★
Up until now, the *Monkey Island* trilogy ruled supreme.

Sam and Max Hit the Road
LucasArts ★★★★
A dog detective and his psycho rabbit sidekick. Classic stuff.



■ (Right) That's Glottis. His teeth may be sharp, but his heart's soft. And big. A lot like the rest of him, in fact. Some good examples of *Grim Fandango*'s lovingly detailed characters (above). Guess which one is Manny in his work clothes?



■ Though *Sin* is a game grounded in realism, not every creature you're going to come across is exactly realistic – just check out this midget-riding-on-big-block beastie.

MERELY NAUGHTY IT'S NAMED "SIN", BUT YOU COULDN'T CALL IT WICKED

Sin

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Developer: Ritual Entertainment ■ Price: £40 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1 (up to 16 multi-player) ■ Requires: P166, 32Mb RAM, 50Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM speed, soundcard, Win 95 ■ Recommended: 3D accelerator card (supports 3Dfx, D3D, PowerVR)

According to almost everyone, *Sin* was to be the ultimate Quake II-killer from the Scourge of Armagon mission pack guys. It's not. Now for the inquest...

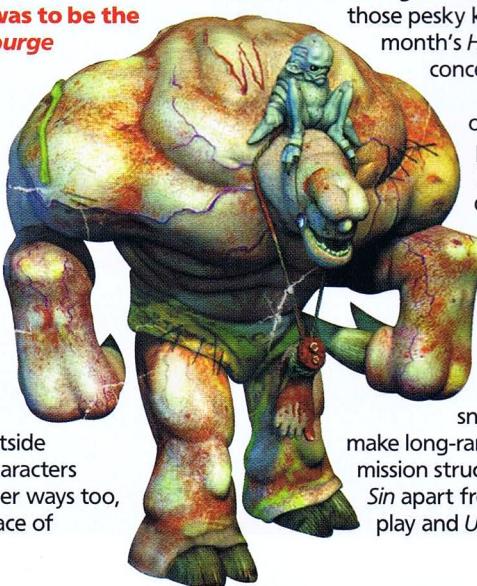
First-person shooters are gradually overwhelming the PC games industry like an uncontrollably metastasising tumour. But while the vast majority of upcoming releases use the *Unreal* engine to display their wares, *Sin* is happy to take *Quake II* technology, manipulating it into something more... authentic.

For *Sin* is a game grounded in realism – a virtual stroll through environments that you'd expect to encounter in the outside world, populated for the large part by characters you'd find in any bank-heist movie. In other ways too, developer Ritual has chosen to slap the face of

convention, and do things its own way. You can disregard simple key collection and location of exits, and say a cheery hello to interactive computer terminals, manifold destructive scenery and objectives that rely on theme-of-the-moment stealth rather than a degree in carnage studies.

Thus it is that *Ritual* has taken a brave stab at re-writing the rulebook according to id and Epic, and in doing so has created a rich, diverse game, that manages to keep the action quota high without omitting a strong narrative. And *Ritual* would have gotten away with it too, if it wasn't for those pesky kids at Valve who, with this month's *Half-Life*, have tackled a similar concept – but with far more success.

It must be said that for much of the game, *Sin* is a pleasure to play; early levels ask you to chase henchmen through meticulously-designed banks and warehouses, and later you can expect to board an oil rig, and ultimately your arch-nemesis' plush mansion. Nifty set-pieces (like bosses cropping up mid-level, before running away), the obviously *GoldenEye*-inspired sniper rifle that enables you to make long-range kills, and the non-linear mission structure, are all plus points that set *Sin* apart from *Quake II*'s repetitive style of play and *Unreal*'s linearity.



↑ Uppers & Downers

Saints

- Excellent level design
- Realistic game world is neat
- Usable vehicles add to the fun

Sinners

- A crippling failure to innovate
- Re-loading saved games takes an age



■ The big problem is *Sin's* lack of innovation – and that's just not something you can get away with in the month of *Half-Life*.

Yet it's ultimately let down by a failure to startle or amaze. Many of the missions demand that you creep around, taking enemies out before alarms are set off (again, from *GoldenEye*), but failure to remain hidden comes at a price. Make yourself known, and a seemingly infinite supply of armed guards appear rapidly from nowhere, making further progress near-impossible and necessitating you reload a saved game. Unfortunately, this is no painless process – loading times are long, and bearing in mind that the game is so tough, you must be prepared to sit through many minutes of impotent inaction waiting for another go.

MAKE YOURSELF KNOWN AND AN INFINITE SUPPLY OF ARMED GUARDS APPEAR RAPIDLY FROM NOWHERE

Elsewhere, *Sin* proves itself little more than a rich source of plagiarised ideas; *Duke Nukem* voice-overs punctuate the action; enemy models have localised damage skins, making single head shots fatal (*GoldenEye* once more); and you will have seen almost all the weapons at your disposal before – it's an unoriginal collection that relies on the pistol, shotgun, chaingun, machine gun and rocket launcher to form its bulk.

Despite these failings, however, the amount of work expended on *Sin* is clear. Level design is generally good, and aside from a couple of lame underwater sequences, the sub-objectives (as indicated vocally by your sidekick, JC) are interesting enough to keep you going. The addition of a couple of useable vehicles is particularly welcome, and the opening, which sees you in control of a helicopter chaingun, is innovative. Add to this an extensive training area and shooting range, between-mission cut-scenes, and sharp visuals, and *Sin* sounds like a contender for king of its genre.

Yet for all its instantly-recognisable appeal, the game is ultimately a mixed bag of rehashed ideas punctuated by a few sublime set-pieces that hint at what could have been. Bear in mind that *Half-Life* out-performs it in just about every area, and *Sin* is left firmly in the position of also-ran. Damn those guys at Valve. ★★★

Matthew Pierce

Or you could try...

Half-Life
Sierra ****
Revolutionary step-on from any previous 3D shooter, and our PC Game of the Month.

Unreal
GT Interactive *****
Pre-Half-Life, the finest first-person 3D shooter on the PC, and still fantastic.

EMPIRE OF SIN

BE A BIG SHOT IN A SMALL CITY



■ Ah, isometric 3D streets. *Gangsters* looks just like *Sim City*, but with guns.

AS YOUR INFLUENCE EXPANDS, YOU CAN POACH HOODS FROM RIVAL GANGS AND BRIBE CITY OFFICIALS

↑ Uppers & ↓ Downers

Gun sharks

- Old-style good looks
- Gets better as you play

Gun shy

- Off-puttingly complicated
- Not one for the over-moral



■ Gangsters is packed with pleasing period detail: it feels and looks like *White Heat*.

Gangsters

■ Publisher: Eidos Interactive ■ Developer: Hothouse ■ Price: £34.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-4 ■ Requires: Pentium, 120MHz, 32Mb RAM, 140Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive, 2Mb DirectX compatible graphics card, DirectSound compatible sound card, Win 95 ■ Recommended: TCP/IP, IPX network or modem and Internet account for multiplayer

In *Sim City* you had to keep your citizenship happy and wealthy. *Gangsters* is the opposite: you've got to scare them and squeeze them dry.

Gangsters is set in the 1930s, in the fictional, Chicago-like New Temperance. It's the height of prohibition, making it ideal turf for your kind of morality-free aspiring gang leader. You've got a bit of dosh put away, and a couple of minor rackets going, but you want to make it Capone-big, and fast.

Time, then, to build an empire on human weakness. First off, you'll need to recruit a few mobsters to help you squeeze money out of the local businesses – you'll need a financial base. Extortion, murder and the rest will follow, along with accountants to keep track of your largely ill-gotten gains, and lawyers to get you out of tight spots. As your influence expands and wealth increases, you can poach hoods from rival gangs, start legitimate(ish) cover

businesses and bribe city officials. If anybody gets in your way, there are various ways to bring them round, ranging from intimidation to murder. Orders are given out at the start of each quaintly-named working week, when you tell your guys where to go and who to do over.

It's clear that a lot of attention has been paid to the way *Gangsters* looks. The street views are excellent – packed with people in period dress, a large number of them carrying violin cases. Less satisfying, at least at first, are the controls. The orders screens that enable you to control your gang seem cluttered, and the whole thing off-puttingly complicated. Put in the time, however, and you'll be rewarded with a satisfying strategy game – and a seriously large crime empire. A game that gets better the more you put into it. ★★★

Jim Chandler



Or you could try...

Sim City 2000
Electronic Arts ***
The grand-daddy of sim games. Build a huge city up from nothing.

Syndicate Wars
Electronic Arts ***
More tactical than *Gangsters*, but you still control a gang bent on world domination.



Football World Manager

■ Publisher: **Ubisoft**
 ■ Developer: **Caffeine Studios**
 ■ Price: £34.99 ■ Release date: **January** ■ Players: 1
 ■ Requires: **P90, 16Mb RAM, 25Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive, DirectX 5-compatible sound and video cards, Win 95** ■ Recommended: **P166, 32Mb RAM**

Caffeine peps up the footy management genre with an ambitious first release.

The work that's gone into this is apparent from kick off – after all, only someone who's seriously trying is going to offer you over 1,200(!) clubs with which to begin your managerial career. As well as any British team, you can pick one of the world's big boys (Spain's Barcelona, say), or one of its tiddlers (Babrunas from the Lithuanian second division, anyone?), or anything in between. Not only that, *Football World Manager* also comes with "Big" Ron Atkinson's gold-plated seal of approval, and a superb interface, giving you clear and easy access to any part of the game. There's an accurate transfer system, ways to train your players that make a real difference to your team's performance, and assorted financial shenanigans – a potentially dull area that's been judged just right, with exactly enough detail to make it relevant. It doesn't ask you to earn more money by – I dunno – upping the price of season tickets and replica shirts, and quite right too.

Unfortunately, though the pre-season warm-up is spot on, come match day *FWM* drops down the league. Although you have good control over formations and style of play, the brief match highlights do little to help you see how your guys are performing. The info provided during each match is either irrelevant, or presented in such a way that it gives little idea as to what changes to make too.

FWM is a cross between *Championship Manager* and *Premier League Manager*, which is a pretty good start. Further editions are promised, and from the effort put in here, don't be surprised if they come on in leaps and bounds. Watch for this series – it could be capable of Aston Villa-like surprises in seasons to come. ★★★ **Glen Weston**



■ The giant robots so popular in Japanese pop culture (see *Gundam* et al) never made an impression in the west. It's a shame, here partly redressed.

METAL MONSTER

CHOOSE YOUR SUIT, IT'S TIME TO DO BATTLE



Shogo: Mobile Armour Division

■ Publisher: **Micros** ■ Developer: **Monolith Productions** ■ Price: £30 ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: 1-16 ■ Requires: **P166, 32Mb RAM, 50Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive, soundcard, Win 95** ■ Recommended: **3D accelerator card (supports 3Dfx, D3D, PowerVR)**

An original first-person shooter? Surely you jest. Nope, says Monolith.

It's an original mix: half-and-half *Quake II* and *MechWarrior II*. The end result is top fun, and if not quite as tasty as id or Epic efforts, still worth a try. Essentially a first-person shooter, *Shogo* differs from the current crop by virtue of its manga theme, with wide-eyed Japanese heroes, an anime-style soundtrack, and giant, OTT weaponry. There's much more character interaction going on here than in your average shooter too.

You start as a foot soldier, but your first task is to find, and choose, a giant, Mech-style robot suit: from then on, the action revolves around battling similarly huge, hulking robots across a variety of environments. The style of play owes more to *Quake* than *MechWarrior*,

THE ACTION REVOLVES AROUND BATTLING HUGE, HULKING ROBOTS

however, and though you're wearing a massive metal suit, you're able to jump and strafe with ease. Plus, you can transform into a vehicle, which is faster at the expense of firepower.

Utilising Monolith's proprietary LithTech engine (also appearing in *Blood 2*), the visuals are top-notch – lighting effects and your weapons' particle trails, in particular, are as good as any competitors'. The levels are well-designed too, and display an attention to detail often missing in games of the genre, while enemy and item placement is top-notch. Multiplayer deathmatching is good, too.

Indeed, only a couple of minor drawbacks prevent *Shogo: MAD* from being exceptional. First, it's easy to become confused by the sheer power of the game's weapons. The explosions and smoke trails look impressive, yet often

make the battlefield hugely confusing. It's not a huge game either – a few solid days of play will see a skilled gamer beat it. Other than that, though, it's a blast. ★★★★ **Matthew Pierce**

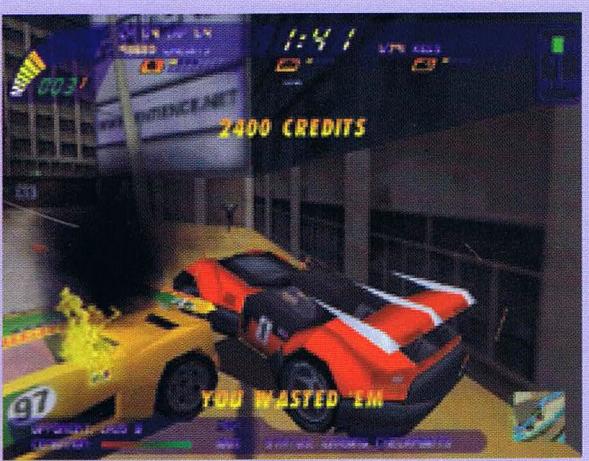
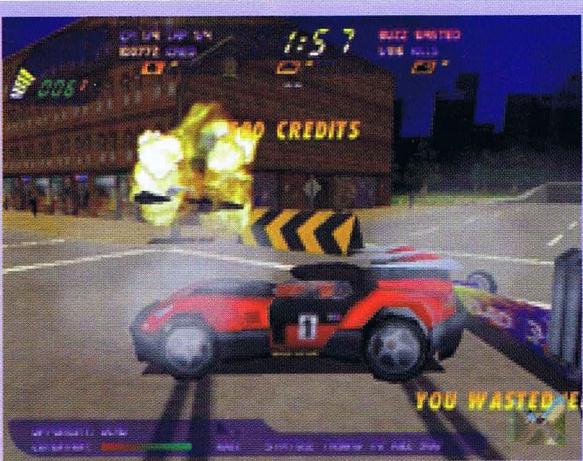
Uppers & Downers

Robocops
 ■ Smashing up cars, trucks and buildings is always fun
 ■ Well-designed levels

Robocacks
 ■ Battle confusion can do your head in
 ■ It's not very big

Or you could try...

Colony Wars Vengeance
 Psynosis ***
 Great-looking 3D shooter, set in space and full of fun stuff to do if you search for it, but perhaps perhaps a bit empty feeling.



Railroad Tycoon II

■ Publisher: Take 2 Interactive
■ Developer: Poptop
Software ■ Price: £34.99
■ Release date: on sale now
■ Players: 1 and networked game
■ Requirements: P133, 16Mb RAM, 130Mb HD space, 4x CD ROM drive, 1024 x 768 capable video card, Win95

Nearly ten years after Sid Meier's classic let us play model railways without a giant loft, the sequel's here.

■ Back at the start of the '90s, *Railroad Tycoon* was an excellent strategy game that set you the task of building a railway network from scratch until, by delivering enough of the right cargo to the right places, you headed a Great Western-like empire that could see off your computer-controlled opponents. *Railroad Tycoon II* stays faithful to this theme, but features enough improvements to bring cheers from choo-choo fans.

This time round the emphasis has moved toward the financial side of things, with a much-improved simulation of the Stock Market. The world economy, which develops as the game progresses, now depends on 34 different cargo types that you have to transport. The railway operations, meanwhile, have been simplified – they now comprise little more than track laying, station building, and telling your trains where to go and what to carry. Signalling and tunnelling aren't in the game, which is bound to disappoint some of you.

RTII provides excellent and prolonged gameplay with strong AI and bags of options. Scenarios are set throughout the world and cover a period stretching from the early 1800s to 2020 – play for long enough and you should get the opportunity to use all 60+ steam, diesel, and electric engines provided. A campaign game is included, and if you tire of taking on the computer, multiplayer options are supported via the Internet. Features you don't like can be minimised or excluded by setting your own level of difficulty, while most operations can be carried out with *RTII* paused for a turn-based game.

But whatever level it's played at, and whether you pause the action or race against the clock, the challenge is considerable – as is the satisfaction of beating the various real-life characters from railway history who are pitted against you. A great game, then, if one that demands specialist interest and taste. ★★★★
Glen Weston

MOTOR SLAY MADNESS ONE FOR DR MARK GRIFFITHS TO GET HIS TEETH INTO...

Carmageddon 2: Carpocalypse Now

■ Publisher: Sales Curve Interactive ■ Developer: Stainless ■ Price: £34.99 ■ Release date: on sale now
■ Players: 1-6 ■ Requirements: P166, 16Mb RAM, 200Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive, SVGA, DirectX6-compatible soundcard, Win 95 ■ Recommended: 3Dfx or Direct3D-compatible 3D card, joystick, steering wheel

The controversial, blood-splattered racing game where you're encouraged to mash everything (and everyone) that gets in your way. We're amazed the censors let them get away with it...

The original *Carmageddon* was a masterpiece of hype. A bog-standard driving game, massively built up by the simple fact that you got rewarded for smashing opposing cars and squishing red-blooded, quite-clearly-human pedestrians. Until the BBFC (British Board of Film Censors) made a big fuss about it, and the version that went on sale featured green-blooded zombies to flatten instead.

And now here's the second game. Again, it was to have featured red pedestrian-blood splattering all over the screen. Again, the BBFC got involved. Again, SCI has given in, and released *Carmageddon 2* with – you guessed it – green-blooded zombies instead of people.

It makes little difference, of course. The game's either good or bad, whether it's red or green. And, amazingly in this case, *Carmageddon 2* actually happens to be quite good. Where the original was a bit over-chaotic and lacked any real goals, *Carpocalypse Now* has a decent structure to it. You need to complete three races (making sure to earn extra points and time by wiping out your opponents and smearing zombies all over the place) to

Uppers & Downers

Red blood
■ A decent combination of racing and utter mayhem
Green blood
■ Your mother probably won't like it
■ Realistic handling, but it feels too heavy
■ Iron Maiden

get to a race proper, where the clock isn't remotely impressed by how many kills you make. Complete that and you move on to the next batch of races. Basic stuff, but it gives you more to get your teeth into. And the thing's packed with bizarre power-ups too – particularly intriguing is the enormous spiky ball on a chain, one guaranteed to completely screw up your handling.

Ah, yes, the handling. Your basic car steers like a cow and crashes at the slightest provocation, but it's sturdy enough. Should you hate it (and you will) your only option is to earn enough money to buy an opponent's car, which becomes available when the owner gets killed during a race. Much better. And with the handling sorted, you can start to enjoy some of the game's incidental pleasures, like nifty graphics (although if you have a 3D card you may find that it's all a bit too clean) and sonics "enhanced" by a raunchy rawk soundtrack from Iron Maiden.

If you've got a weak stomach (or a moral objection to knocking people down, perish the thought) stay away. If you have a typically sick gamer's sense of humour and a cast-iron constitution, however, you'll find *Carpocalypse Now* a hoot. It's far from epoch-making, but beneath the hype you'll find a decent enough racer with plenty of frills. Red or green, what's the difference? ★★★ Travis

Or you could try...

Need for Speed 3: Hot Pursuit
Electronic Arts ★★★★
Put you in a similar law-breakin' situation. Unless you chose to be a chasing copper.

Monster Truck Madness
Microsoft ★★★★
Pull off crazy stunts in trucks the size of New Mexico.



■ C2: It's guilty, queasy fun. Cathartic, we think you call it.



Powerslide

■ Publisher: **GT Interactive**
■ Developer: **Ratbag** ■ Price: £34.99 ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: 1-8 ■ Requires: P166, 16Mb RAM, 86Mb hard disk space, 4x CD-ROM drive ■ Recommended: 32Mb RAM, 3D card ■ Supports: Force feedback, modems, serial link-up, steering wheel

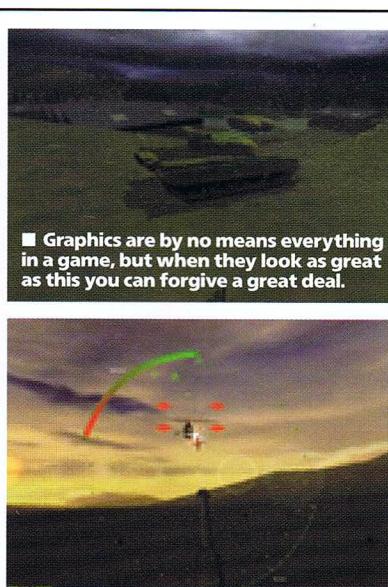
A 3D accelerator showcase, Emergent's debut doesn't pull punches when it comes to speed, but car control is less impressive.

■ Rarely has a game been so appropriately named. While other PC racers look to motorsport for inspiration, *Powerslide* seems to have taken its cue from the local ice rink. Traction is a dirty word here; it doesn't even get a look in.

You can forget about slavishly accurate models of F1 tracks and the flat tarmac of the post-*Ridge Racer* brigade. Instead, *Powerslide* is a game where the ground rarely sports a smooth finish. Its courses pack in some of the prettiest track detail around; there's a dam-based circuit featuring scaleable side walls, dune-filled deserts in which to kick up a dust storm, and even a mine shaft-based run where your vehicle's suspension is thrashed to within an inch of its life. *Carmageddon II* might have the gore, but *Powerslide* has the more spectacular environments. And its game engine throws them around at breakneck speed.

Making the most of this bump-riddled scenery, each car obeys a pretty comprehensive set of physics rules; every rumble of the wheels and collision with immovable objects impacting on its behaviour. And then there are the powerslides. Pretty much every mild bend seems to induce them, turning every race into an epic of skidpan slapstick. Even with a top-of-the-line steering wheel it's a control system that takes ages to master.

The problem is one of size – with just eight playgrounds, and little to do beyond play the single-player championship or multi-player one-offs, it ain't big – and the fact that it relies for its fun on a nuts driving model. Spectacular though this grip-free stuff is, it doesn't make for a classic racing experience. Neither the cars, nor the arenas, convince, while too much time is spent battling with the physics and not the other drivers. Sure, *Powerslide* looks beautiful, but it's hard not to wish for something a little less single-minded. ★★★ **Mark Ramshaw**



■ Graphics are by no means everything in a game, but when they look as great as this you can forgive a great deal.

LOVE IS A BATTLEFIELD

POOR GAME STRIVES FOR ATTENTION WITH TERRIBLE TITLE? HAPPILY, NO

Wargasm

■ Publisher: **Infogrames** ■ Developer: **DiD**
■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: **December 1998** ■ Players: 1-16 ■ Requires **P166, 32Mb RAM, 300Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive, DirectX 6-compatible 3D card, DirectX 6 compatible soundcard, Win 95**
■ Recommended: **PII 266, 64Mb RAM**

Developer DiD takes a bold step away from its simulation roots to provide a blend of real-time strategy and arcade action in a stunning 3D environment. Prepare to be aroused.

In the near future, virtual warfare has replaced the real thing and every nation's disputes are fought out in cyberspace with accurately modelled landscapes and weapons. But – oh no! – this carnage-free warzone falls apart thanks to hackers and subversives who corrupt and take over the virtual battlefield, wreaking havoc in the real world. Your mission – should you choose to accept it – is to take a small army into the World Wide War Web and restore peace to the virtual world.

This is the dubious premise for the equally dubiously titled *Wargasm*. Now, normally any game that prompts a reviewer into using the word "dubious" twice in the opening lines is the sort that should be promptly consigned to the bin, but one look at *Wargasm* and all is forgiven. DiD has employed its new 3D technology here to produce one of the most dazzling experiences on the PC. The glare of the sun, splatter of rain, fireball explosions and

swirls of smoke are all lovely, while countless polygons fly around in the form of accurately modelled ground and air forces. What's more, you can control them all from a tactical map, planning strategies and storming objectives, or you can jump into any tank, 'copter or soldier's boots to engage the enemy first hand.

The controls for each type of unit are consistent and simple, far removed from the complex air simulations upon which DiD has built its reputation. *Wargasm* is designed to provide arcade-style first-person action, with RTS tactical planning and strategy added on.

But having been blinded by eye candy, it's easy to be fooled into thinking *Wargasm* has achieved an unqualified success. It hasn't. Alas, when your eyesight returns and pounding heartbeat stabilises you realise that, despite the awesome views and adrenaline pumping action, the game is not without its faults. Its biggest shortcoming is that in order to garner most enjoyment from *Wargasm* you need to take on the enemy from the first person perspective, yet doing this inevitably leaves the rest of your army floundering about like squaddies on a lager-filled weekend leave. Jump back to the more practical tactical map and control things from there for too long, though, and the game becomes ugly and uninspiring. DiD obviously expects you to keep moving between the two, but there are very few occasions where this advances your cause in the campaign game. This, and other minor niggles, don't cripple *Wargasm*, but they will prevent it from becoming a classic. ★★★★

Jason Weston

Uppers & Downers
Tanks <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Fantastic graphics■ Easy-to-use controls■ Exciting battle action
No tanks <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Annoying flipping between 3D and maps■ Embarrassing name!



■ Don't treat yourself to too much of this kind of action: chances are that while you're playing, your army will let you down.

Or you could try...

Battlezone
Activision ★★★★
A similar combo of first person action and RTS strategy.

Spearhead
Interactive Magic ★★★★
Close to a traditional tank sim, and best in multi-player.



Rival Realms

■ Publisher: **Titus** ■ Developer: **Active Pub** ■ Price: £34.99
 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1-8 (multi-player network game)** ■ Requires: **P90, 36Mb RAM**

WarCraft II gets progressive, with this curious strategy sweetmeat from Romanian newbies Active Pub.

■ Rhubarb and custard. Ham and pineapple. Laurel and Hardy. We're surrounded by things which work best as a double act: contrasting flavours that complement each other beautifully.

When it comes to blending game genres, the same rules should apply. Take your standard off-the-peg RTS sim; every unit is expendable. On the other side of the fence sits the RPG, where emphasis is on preserving a few characters and improving skills through progressive encounters. And never the twain shall meet... until now. *Rival Realms* makes bed-partners of these two styles.

As a game in its own right, it's a pretty well structured affair. The fantasy setting offers you three races to choose from: Humans, Greenskins and Elves. Each has its own units and structures – most of which correspond – but there are exceptions. Where the armies really differ is in their rarer special units, like magic users and thieves. Each unit has skills that give it an advantage over other races.

To begin with, everything is expendable; it's only when the body count rises and your troops start to get good at their jobs that they become worth caring about. Over time, their value to your army as a whole rises, and with a wealth of performance-enhancing items to discover, you can pump your guys up even more. This gives you plenty of freedom to create "customised" armies that you can take into battle time after time.

It all sounds pretty good until you actually play the game, which is marred by oversights. First, the path-finding attributes of your units is pitiful at best. You'll end up screaming as ragged knots of troops bump into trees and follow every damn contour the terrain has to offer. The control interface is a brash affair too, and it's often hard to select one unit from a bunch, especially in the thick of combat. Finally, graphics... a new millennium is dawning, but here we're stuck a year in the past.

As it stands, there's plenty of meat in *Rival Realms'* sandwich, but the bread is a bit on the stale side. ★★

Alex Bickham

DINO-BORED

THE NEW JURASSIC PARK SPIN-OFF. IT'S A DISASTER

Trespasser

■ Publisher: **Electronic Arts** ■ Developer: **Dreamworks Interactive** ■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: **1** ■ Requires: **P166, 32Mb RAM, 120Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive, SVGA, Windows-compatible soundcard, Win 95** ■ Recommended: **DirectX6-compatible 3D card**

Real world physics, a wavy arm, a large pair of virtual breasts and some dinosaurs. Did we forget anything, chaps? Oops! Where's the game?

We know exactly what we think of *Trespasser*, a 3D game based around the whole Jurassic Park franchise, and have no qualms about administering the stern kicking it deserves.

We'll begin by devoting some space to the real-world physics that *Trespasser* feels are so important. Everything that can move in it moves properly. Find a stack of crates and hit them with something, and they'll fall realistically, tumbling one over another like real crates would do – if you had the time on your hands to make such a project appealing.

Then there's the arm. You interact with the "realistic" *Trespasser* world via an arm that can pick things up, swing them around, throw them at other things and, of course, fire guns. It's good in theory, bad in execution. Picking things up with the arm is straightforward; doing anything remotely useful with them, apart from swinging them and throwing them, isn't. And much of the game relies on doing things more complicated than swinging and throwing inanimate objects around. Even firing guns is complicated; we tried to shoot a velociraptor from point-blank range and only hit it on the fifth attempt.

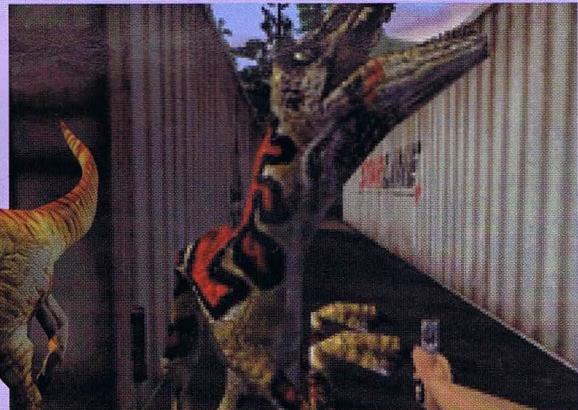
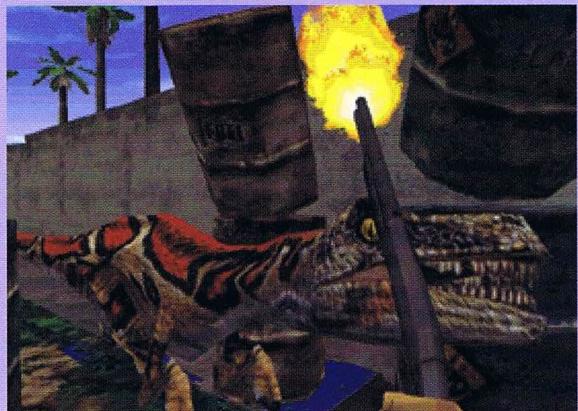
It would be churlish not to cover the virtual breasts, of course. Your character's a girl and, if you look down, you can see your virtual breasts. Just to ensure they're not entirely gratuitous, there's a heart-shaped tattoo on them that acts as a health meter; when it fills up with blood, you're dead. So that's all right, then. Oh, and there are a few dinosaurs hanging around too. You even get to shoot some of them – assuming you can fire the gun.

All of which matters not one jot because *Trespasser* is slow, hideous, complicated to control, and a hair's breadth away from being unplayable. This is hardly a lengthy, over-informative, or particularly amusing critique, yet it's more words than *Trespasser* deserves. ★ **Travis**

Or you could try...

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
Acclaim ★★★
Shoot dinosaurs without worrying about a wobbly arm and boring old physics.

Half Life
Sierra ★★★★
Trespasser isn't the future of 3D gaming; *Half-Life* is. Just buy it, alright?



Oops! So you bought a copy of *Trespasser* by mistake, did you? Want to know what to do with it? Let the shot just above and to the left act as a cue...

↑ Uppers & ↓ Downers

Defence

- The virtual breasts might be a handy first step for would-be transsexuals
- Invaluable for students of falling crate physics. If such a thing exists
- Install it on a friend's PC to make them think it's broken. Wacky japes ahoy!

Prosecution

- Absolutely everything else
- No, really, it's crap
- *Arcade* isn't paying me enough to have to endure rubbish like this



Madden NFL 99

■ Publisher: EA Sports
■ Developer: EA Sports
■ Price: £34.99 ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: 1-4
■ Requires: P166 (with 3D accelerator card), or P200, 16Mb RAM, 20Mb hard disk space, 8xCD-ROM drive, Win 95 ■ Recommended: 3D card
■ Supports: network and modem play

Superbowl's coming soon, and that means we must be due a new *Madden* game. And here it is now.

Sports don't come a great deal more offputtingly complicated (or homoerotic) than American football, but for a period in the early '90s (when the Amiga and Mega Drive ruled the roost) the *John Madden* series of US football sims was red hot, capturing the imagination of usually soccer-obsessed British videogamers. Perhaps it's because of the all-dominating *FIFA* series, perhaps it's because Channel 4 no longer shows the sport – but for some reason the commentator-hosted series has never been quite so popular since.

Madden NFL 99 starts off with a completely barmy video sequence, featuring footage of real-life games edited so that players catch fire when they run particularly quickly, or create *Star Wars: Special Edition*-type shockwaves when they get tackled and hit the turf. This all points towards an *NBA Extreme*-style artistic licence-riddled interpretation of the game, but once you get to the options it's clear that this *Madden* is, as usual, a proper simulation, rather than a full-on arcade extravaganza with impossible moves and crazy pyrotechnics. Thankfully you can bypass all this in-depth stuff and play in arcade mode if you're not particularly well-versed with the finer points of the sport; those into stats and the like, however, will be chuffed with *Madden 99*.

You won't be quite so pleased with the excessive loading period (even with full hard disk install it takes an age), but once up and running you'll have to admit that the graphics look good, only hindered by that traditional American football problem – in helmets and armour everyone looks identical. Here the players look like a squad of Terminators – it may be no coincidence that there are no dogs on the pitch.

If you're a struggler with the rules of American football, you'll inevitably find *Madden's* full

EIGHTH CRUSADE

IT'S STILL GEEKY, JUST NOT QUITE AS GEEKY AS BEFORE



■ Some of the clambering bits owe something to Lara; some of the corridors are reminiscent of *Doom*.

King's Quest: Mask of Eternity

■ Publisher: Cendant ■ Developer: Sierra Studios
■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: 1
■ Requires: P166, 32Mb RAM, 400Mb HD space, 4x CD-ROM drive ■ Recommended: PII 266, 64Mb RAM, 8x CD-ROM drive, 3D accelerator card (3Dfx or D3D)

Mask of Eternity embraces 3D hardware and real-time, without a dice in sight. It's business as usual with the "thees" and "thous", though.

King's Quest, the big name in gaming geekdom, has a long history of crimes against literature. It's no surprise, then, that *Mask of Eternity* – like its seven forebears – attempts to seduce its target audience with sub-Tolkien editorial ardour. Verily, if thou art fearful of olde worlde dialogue, *MoE* is akin to being beaten to death with David Gemmell's Y-fronts.

The RPG was once a staple of the PC owner's gaming diet, yet recent years have seen the genre fall from grace. *Mask of Eternity* acknowledges this: it's fully 3D, hardware accelerated, real-time. Dice-based combat? Text parsers? Begone, foul shades. This latest *King's Quest* enables you to control the (frankly nauseating) "hero" from a first or third-person perspective, using a mouse/keyboard combo.

To describe *Mask of Eternity* as a traditional RPG would thus be misleading. Indeed, weren't it for the fact that the term has largely fallen into disuse, we'd call it an arcade adventure. Its only real old-school leanings can be found in the combat sections. Should you encounter a monster,

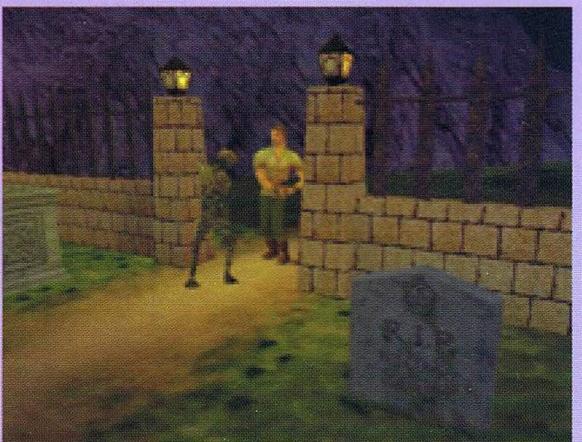
your battle takes place when you select a weapon, then click repeatedly on a target to use it. Damage is calculated from a range of statistics – your level, personal attributes, whatever big stick you've chosen to belt the beast with.

Puzzles? It has them. *Mask of Eternity's* more cerebral elements are rather simple: find an object, then discover where to use it. The arcadey elements make more than a passing nod towards the *Tomb Raiders* of this world too, and it's a better game for that. In short, it's approachable, and that's not an accusation you could level at many of its predecessors. It's a shame, then, that its propensity for clichés will turn many players off before they manage to peel back the cellophane wrapper. ★★★★ James Price

Or you could try...

Fallout
Interplay ****
A surprisingly engrossing futuristic RPG.
Not 3D, but the bitmaps work fine.

Lands of Lore II
Westwood Studios ****
Fully 3D, first-person RPG, but with more maze-negotiation than strictly needed.



■ Talk or fight: if only real-life was as simple as an RPG.

control set rather complex – as well as controls to move your player around, there are six action buttons which change function, depending on what your team's doing – making the arcade one-button option a welcome relief. Even in its simplest mode, however, *Madden* is pretty tricky – it's tough to make any headway against the competent computer teams, and kind of unsatisfying. You need to really understand what you're doing to get decent enjoyment out of a gridiron game, and I don't – not well enough, anyway. For fans, though, this is a current genre highlight, if no radical improvement over earlier offerings. For non-fans it might prove a useful way to learn the game ★★ Tim Cant



Microsoft Combat Flight Simulator WWII Europe Series

■ Publisher: Microsoft ■ Developer: Microsoft ■ Price: £34.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-multi-player

■ Requires: P133, 16Mb RAM, 200Mb HD space, 2x CD-ROM drive, 2Mb DirectX graphics card, DirectSound 6.0-compatible soundcard, Win 95 ■ Supports: modem or network play

Scramble at elevenses to defend old Blighty, then back for tea and medals.

Microsoft's *Flight Simulator* was written shortly after the Wright Brothers' first flight, it seems. It's always been one of the premier plane sims, offering would-be civil pilots a chance to try their hands without either the cost or danger. And now it's the turn of the fighter pilot wannabes. Microsoft

has been unbelievably slow to realise the additional appeal that guns and enemies would offer, but at last its taken the *Flight Sim* engine, added the necessary, and given us a series of missions set during the Second World War.

It's traditional stuff. You can fly for the RAF, the Luftwaffe or the US Army Air Force, each outfit using a couple of aircraft types, including Spitfires, Messerschmitts and Mustangs. Each has been lovingly simulated by the Seattle lads, right down to the 'schmitt's tendency to flip over on landing.

To get the hang of your steed, there's a "free flight" option to practice taking off, landing and generally pointing your craft in the right direction. There's a "Quick

"Combat" choice, too, so you can dogfight with waves of enemies until you get shot down. Then, once you vaguely know what you're doing, there's the choice of missions, ranging from simple dogfights to ground-attack or escort. Finally, fly in a campaign – either the Battle of Britain, or the air war over Germany.

In its basics the game looks much the same as *Flight Simulator* '98, but with different cockpits, obviously. It's even possible to use *Flight Sim* add-ons, so you can shoot down 747s over modern Chicago. All in all, then, predictably cracking stuff. Microsoft might not be fast, but when it does it, it does it right. ★★★★ Jim Chandler



PC budget re-releases | by Robin Alway and Sam Richards

Holster your six-shooter of frugality, don your ten-gallon hat of thriftiness and ride with us over to Cheapskate City. Who cares if your horse is knackered and fit only for glue? You don't have far to go to find the plains littered with a huge number of games re-released at budget price.



Andretti Racing

■ Publisher: EA Classics ■ Price: £12.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1

Despite claims to be an accurate sim of IndyCar racing, this Mario Andretti license remains a mindless track-screamer at heart. Sure, you can go back to your garage and tweak your vehicle set-up if you want, but essentially you're treated to a brash, bold display of Americana on wheels. Where F1 tracks are narrow, crowded with cars and dangerously winding, IndyCar tracks are by nature walled-in ovals – no doubt great for family-group spectators, but if you're used to driving a PC you're going to find the experience unchallenging. Thankfully, EA has bunged in a couple of more stimulating circuits and a stock car option too, for an exhilarating alternative. ★★



Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Price: £9.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1

We can't help harbouring a soft spot for top-down RPG *Blood Omen*. It could be the self-indulgent voice-overs or the way you get to drink the blood of maidens. It may be the fact that undead hero Kain can transform into a wolf or a bat to reach new areas in the retro Gauntlet-style realm of Nosgoth. But even behind the hammed-up clichés and the amusing tackiness, the original *Legacy of Kain* game can't hide its pitifully blocky visual engine. It's also frustrating that you're unable to save your progress except at designated "Save Shrines" underground, and the plot is linear and constricting. A sequel – *Soul Reaver* – is due soon. ★★



Cyberstorm 2: Corporate Wars

■ Publisher: Sierra Originals ■ Price: £9.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-8

Set in a galaxy where companies use stomping battle machines to colonise sectors of space, this sequel to *Mission Force: Cyberstorm* takes an overly complex look at top-down strategy. You can play a turn-based or a real-time game. As one of eight outfits with different policies and tech, you're overwhelmed with resource options that would baffle an industrial consultant. Each game begins with you dispatching units for battle – robotic warriors you must build from lists of components. After working on your vehicles for so long you develop an attachment to them, but sadly the combat they experience is flat and uninspiring. *Dark Reign* is better. ★★



Dark Reign

■ Publisher: Activision ■ Price: £9.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-2

At a time when it looked like *C&C: Red Alert* and *WarCraft* 2 had the real-time strategy genre stitched-up, two games elbowled through the throng of clones to offer a genuine challenge: *Total Annihilation* and *Dark Reign*. The latter has a sci-fi setting, and a well-polished ethos. The interface is clear, and the missions intelligent. Its only major failing is that it's too much like *Command & Conquer*: some of the graphics look the same, and troops respond to point-and-click deployment with similar phrases. Luckily, intricate AI and order-giving routines make it a noteworthy experience in its own right, and at this price strategy scavengers should munch it up. ★★★★



The Full Wormage

■ Publisher: MicroProse ■ Price: £29.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-6

Comedy turn-based combat has fuelled the *Worms* concept since the early days of Amiga, and this compilation pack is designed to re-light the flame of admiration in time for developer Team 17 to launch *Worms Armageddon*. *Worms United* is the enhanced PC version of the original game, and *Worms 2* is, naturally, the 1997 sequel. They feature similar tiny pink soldiers on 2D levels who take it in terms to shoot ludicrously powerful weapons at each other. As a bonus, the pack includes one table from Team 17's thrilling *Addiction Pinball* title, which features icons and sounds from *Worms 2*. Colossal multi-player fun... but doesn't everyone own at least one *Worms* game by now? ★★



Pandemonium 2

■ Publisher: Ubisoft Classique ■ Price: £12.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1

Every pixel in this run-and-jump "platform" game signals its tedious console heritage. Nikki, a mystical lass with a spring in her step, and her faithful sidekick Fargus are off saving their fantasy homeland from evil. As before, the action is on rails: that is, although the attractive visuals are ostensibly 3D, you can, in fact, only move backwards and forwards along a set path. Animated cut-scenes perpetuate in the superfluous storyline. Jumping on villain's heads and somersaulting to pick up rings is cute in a *Sonic the Hedgehog* sort of way, but the affair is less demanding than *Manic Miner* was nearly 15 years ago. ★★



Player Manager 2 Extra: Chase for Glory

■ Publisher: Sold Out ■ Price: £4.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1

Combining the ancient Kick Off engine with a no-nonsense football management sim, *Player Manager* 2 is a neat idea which disappoints in the execution. It's the same concept that was originally behind *Soccer Nation*, before the designer bottled it and removed the on-pitch arcade section. Even the most recent *Player Manager* 2, all the boardroom spreadsheet elements are too shallow and the tackle-pass-shoot sections are dull and suffer from jerky animation. ★



Pod Gold

■ Publisher: Ubisoft Classique ■ Price: £9.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-8

When the original *Pod* came along in the spring of '97 it was hailed as a triumph of the "future racing" genre, though its marketing revolved around the novelty that it was specially designed for MMX machines. Now, of course, all new PCs are MMX-compatible, so the gimmick's worn thin. Fortunately, with the addition of 16 new tracks, eight vehicles, and enhanced Netplay options, the overhauled *Pod Gold* remains top fun. The circuits love to fox you, with dead-ends, roller-coaster falls and intersecting levels, and there are short-cuts to find. There's something thin and fragile about the cars, but you can't fault those high-energy, twisting track designs. ★★



Railroad Tycoon Deluxe

■ Publisher: Sold Out ■ Price: £4.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1

Sid Meier's strategy classic looked ropey when it came out over five years ago, and although the *Deluxe* edition added SVGA graphics, it still looks sub-Civilisation. You play an entrepreneur in the early 1800s, and must wrestle with other transport barons as each attempts to carve out a railway empire. North America, Eastern or Western American, South America, Africa and Europe are all territories ripe for exploitation, as you juggle investments, make up to 32 types of train and lay tracks to shunt goods between industrialised cities. Some call it engrossing, others call it tedious. To top it all, the original *Civ* is less anal and also available on budget. ★★



Star Trek Federation Compilation

■ Publisher: Interplay ■ Price: £29.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1

This is a clutch of the best-selling *Star Trek* tie-ins in one pack. The Next Gen titles are both decidedly average, particularly the over-rated *Generations*, which tries to blend adventure with brief first-person exploration episodes, failing to really captivate with either. *Star Trek 25th Anniversary* is a 2D point-and-click adventure, which is well plotted and offers suitable retro entertainment, although you may be put off by the stiff-indulgent *Trekness*. The real gems are *Star Fleet Academy* and the add-on pack, *Chekov's Lost Missions*. The FMV is tedious and the interface is overly complex, but there's nothing to beat the feeling of sitting in that chair. ★★★★



UFO: Enemy Unknown

■ Publisher: Sold Out ■ Price: £4.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1

A little fragment of history for less than a fiver, *UFO: Enemy Unknown* has spawned a clutch of follow-ups and established the careers of many a MicroProse employee. The turn-based combat and lumpy low-res visuals may be a turn-off, but this is where X-COM began and if you're a fan, you must have this in your collection (if only to preserve a sense of credibility). Your task is to investigate alien sightings across the globe, visit crash sites, disable alien survivors and research new weapons, ready for when the invasion force arrives. *UFO* is slow and un-comely by today's standards, but the tactical depth is astonishing. ★★★



World of Combat 2000

■ Publisher: Novologic ■ Price: £34.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-100

Novologic has built a rep as a developer that can blend authentic military simulation with top-whack fun. So it is with *Comanche 3*, *F22 Raptor* and *Armored Fist 2*, which are exceptional helicopter, jet fighter and tank games, respectively. Not only are they based on genuine military specs, but the mission structures and control interfaces are designed to make combat easy, even if you're a beginner. Although all three possess the blockiness fundamental to voxel-based landscaping, it doesn't matter when you can connect to the *Nova World* online gaming server and take on scores of opponents in one integrated arena. ★★★★★

New N64 Games

Archie
Nintendo 64
Game of
the Month



■ Link with Epona, his trusty pal – and furry car.

FORGING LINKS

THE ELF-BOY'S BACK, AND IN THE BEST ZELDA GAME EVER



■ Darunia is a friendly beast, keen to help Link in his quest.

Zelda: Ocarina of Time

■ Publisher: **Nintendo** ■ Developer: **Nintendo**
■ Price: £49.99 ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: **1**
■ Extras: **Rumble Pak**

Mario-creator Shigeru Miyamoto's latest game has arrived in a thick cloud of excitement, with many calling it the best videogame ever. Well, is it?

And so, after three long years of Zelda fans yanking clumps of rapidly-greying hair out of their tender scalps, one of the most delayed, hyped and coveted videogames ever finally arrives on the Nintendo 64. But was it worth the wait? Has Shigeru Miyamoto – surely the Spielberg of videogames – created the masterpiece that everyone was expecting?

Nintendo's second place to Sony in the UK means that no matter how good *Ocarina of Time* is, it probably won't



Navi, the little winged Tinkerbell type, changes colour when danger's near, alerting Link. She's a good friend to have around.

shift as many copies as *Tomb Raider III*, *Crash Bandicoot* or the other PlayStation blockbusters released this Christmas. And it's unlikely to singlehandedly create a whole new market for the Nintendo 64, either.

But *Ocarina of Time* deserves to do all this and more. And why? Because, quite simply, it's so very far ahead of anything on the PlayStation it utterly defies comparison.

But let's not get carried away. Isn't this just an RPG? All the signs are here: a kingdom about to be plunged into darkness, sacred stones, fairies and – suspiciously – a hero with pointy ears called Link. But fear not, because this is anything but a true role player. The *Zelda* games, as they started out on the NES – and later, the SNES and Game Boy – have always been action-orientated adventures at heart (although the Japanese confusingly call this genre the action-RPG). And this 3D incarnation is true to form, with its blend of combat, exploration and character interaction.

There were fears that this 3D *Zelda* would feel different from its forebears, more like the Miyamoto-designed *Super Mario 64*. They were valid fears, too. After all, what were previously two entirely different 2D genres – one a side-on platformer (*Mario*), and the other an overhead adventure – could easily have been pulled far too close together by Nintendo's technology-driven application of snazzy 3D paint. Thankfully, this hasn't happened. Apart from a similar behind-the-character, third-person perspective to *Mario 64*, this is very much *Zelda* as we all know it – except it goes way beyond previous installments.

Perhaps more so than in the old 2D outings, this new *Zelda*'s combat is

complicated but rewarding. Playing Link, you pick up a variety of weapons along the way (including swords, shields, a slingshot and a boomerang), then take on all manner of foes – from small skeletons and spiders, to gigantic, end-of-section bosses. And the combination of switched perspectives (including first-person for the targeting of certain weapons) means that you'll need considerable practise if you're to stop the evil Ganondorf getting his mitts on the Triforce – the source of all energy in Link's world of Hyrule.

But let's rewind for a moment. Things kick off in the

cutesy surroundings of Kokiri forest – a village bustling with sprightly, impish characters who impart goodies and information (such as weapons and basic combat skills) to start you on your way. After exploring a huge dying tree – one of the game's many dungeons, packed with puzzles and monsters – you'll break into a castle, where you'll meet the eponymous and similarly pointy-eared Princess Zelda. But these sections are just invigorating warm-up exercises – littered with helpful hints and training exercises – to gently shoehorn you into the incredible world that Miyamoto's team has created.

After years of running around the restrictive, tunnel-like environments of most 3D games, adapting to the new level of 3D freedom *Zelda 64* offers is akin to having been shut in a dark room for days

ITS DESPERATELY CHILDISH, CLOYINGLY CUTE AND IT'LL HAVE YOU GRINNING FROM EAR TO EAR EVERY TIME YOU PLAY IT

Uppers & Downers

Epic

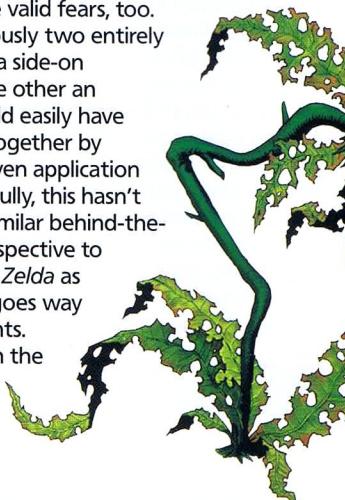
- Magnificent Miyamoto masterpiece
- Thoroughly engrossing story
- Packed with surprises and sub-games

Chronic

- You'll lose your mates (possibly your job too)



The end bosses are huge, like this dragon (above). Link has to complete sub-quests along the way (below).





and then stepping into the bright sunlight, to be confronted with a view of beautiful rolling hills. Link's world is vast, and positively drenched in realistic effects and detail. The sun rises and sets convincingly, casting shadows and bathing the scenery in sumptuous hues. Mountains tower into the sky, rivers flow, birds chirp – and hours pass by as you wander around taking in the wonder of it all. The best visuals on the N64 yet? Without a doubt.

There are also enough genuinely brilliant – and original – ideas in *Ocarina of Time* to force even the most talented non-

■ *Zelda* has plenty in the way of innovative combat. Lock on to a foe with your targeting system to keep him in front of you.

a variety of tunes (that you learn along the way) by tapping the yellow buttons on the N64's pad in the correct sequence. These tunes can be used for many things, such as summoning Epona, your horse, making friends with strangers and even – in the case of the Sun Song – changing day to night, and vice versa. It's desperately childish, cloyingly cute and it'll have you grinning from ear to ear every time you try it. The gorgeous cut-scenes that are spread throughout the adventure will impress too, endowing the story with a grace and charm that other, subsequent adventures will find near-impossible to match.

That this latest version of *Zelda* is subtitled *Ocarina of Time* is no accident. Nintendo isn't joking – this game will drain serious amounts of your time if you're prepared to see it through to its conclusion. A conservative estimate has it that playing the quickest route is around 60 hours worth, and far more if you want to experience *Zelda*'s wealth of bonuses and entertaining sub-games. There's value-for-money to be had here, that's for sure.

Is *Ocarina of Time* for everyone? Well, perhaps not – ultimately, this is an interactive storybook whose pages are steeped in the inimitable Nintendo style. Yet for those who love Nintendo, it is just about The Best Thing Ever. It's immediately accessible yet staggeringly deep; it's gloriously cute, while somehow managing to be perhaps the most sophisticated, grown up game of all. It's a rich, emotive experience that's been crafted with such wit, intelligence and love (yes, love!), that it's near impossible not to fall deeply under its spell. Try and resist it and you really will be cutting off your nose to spite your face. The Best Videogame of All Time? Well, yes.

And if you haven't got an N64? Go and buy one. Trust me, it'll be worth it. ★★★★ Jason Brookes

A CONSERVATIVE ESTIMATE HAS IT THAT PLAYING THE QUICKEST ROUTE IS AROUND 60 HOURS WORTH, FAR MORE IF YOU WANT TO EXPERIENCE ZELDA'S WEALTH OF BONUSES AND ENTERTAINING SUB-GAMES

Nintendo game designer to eat humble pie for months. The time travel feature is an ingenious case in point. In the first quarter of the game, you control Link as an innocent, sprightly nipper; it's not until you collect three "spiritual stones" that you'll be warped seven years forward to control him as a teenager – now faced with a scarier, more challenging quest. And if you want a sniff of the action much later on, you'll need to make repeated trips to the Temple of Time to travel back and forth between the two time zones. And then there's the Ocarina itself. What an innovation! Throughout the game, you'll be required to play



■ Travelling between the two time zones, you'll find the very same locations, subtly altered.

Or you could try...

Mystical Ninja
Konami ★★★
RPG-com-platformer with great Japanese humour and lush graphics.

Quest 64
Konami ★★
Flawed pretender to the *Zelda* throne. Predictable action RPG tat.

V FOR VELOCITY

IT'S GRAVEL-SPITTIN', CAR SPINNIN' CHAOS



V-Rally '99

■ Publisher: Infogrames ■ Developer: Eden Studios
■ Price: £40 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-2
■ Extras: Rumble Pak, steering wheel

The game considered by many to be better than Sega Rally finally makes it to the N64 after racking up phenomenal sales figures on the PlayStation. And a damn fine conversion it is too.

Rallying is a very different sport to Formula One. Can you imagine a pampered F1 superstar changing his own tyres? Reading a map? Encouraging spectators to help push his car out of a mud-filled ditch – or off the body of one of their fallen comrades? Of course not. Rallying is dirty and dangerous and the prospect of a season consisting of regular night races through forests, along icy alpine passes, in torrential rain, fog, or blizzards would send an F1 driver cowering to his shrink – or, more likely, screaming at his agent via a mobile phone. So, obviously, it makes for terrific videogame entertainment.

V-Rally '99 simulates this rallying experience accurately. The handling is spot on (especially if you play using a steering wheel), with skilful use of the handbrake, opposite lock skids and a good measure of fearlessness among the attributes necessary to keep your car on the road, let alone actually mount a challenge on the leader-board. Unsurprisingly, then, the control methods are incredibly difficult to learn, but once you've got the hang of things, swinging your high-powered vehicle around slick hairpin bends can be incredibly satisfying.

Indeed, if you do manage to overcome the initial frustration that comes with a game requiring such precision and concentration that even the slightest accidental twitch

of the joystick in the wrong place is enough to send your car spinning out of control (even on a relatively straight part of the track), then you'll find a huge challenge awaiting you. V-Rally '99 is a big game, in terms of both the number of different courses and the variety of different vehicles.

Skilful performances in the Arcade and Championship modes gradually unlock a total of 19 cars in four categories, ranging from simple front-wheel drive vehicles to super-powerful 4WD monsters. You can tweak and customise everything, from the stiffness of the suspension to the gear ratios, and knowing how to set the car up for each of the 24 tracks is essential for mastery of the time trial sections.

The game moves at a considerable pace, and the graphics are pleasingly smooth and realistic throughout. The headlight effect during night stages is especially convincing, although if the car flies up in the air after a bad crash it's glaringly obvious that there is absolutely no scenery beyond the track walls – just an expanse of white, empty space. The way bits of the landscape pop up from nowhere on certain stages is another somewhat disappointing reminder that you're only playing a computer game, but for the most part, the illusion remains intact.

V-Rally '99 is a game you'll have to really work at to get the most out of. It doesn't have the pick up and play appeal of something like F-Zero X, but it'll increase your blood pressure every bit as much. More, probably, given the fact that you'll spend your first couple of hours concocting innovative new curses to bestow on the programmers. But you'll grow to love it. ★★★★

Martin Kitts

Or you could try...

Top Gear Rally
Nintendo ***
Not quite so tricky to control, but then not quite so much long-term depth.

F1 World Grand Prix
Nintendo ****
Okay, so it's not a rally game. But it is the best real-world driving game for N64.

■ Like real high-performance rally cars, your "rides" in V-Rally '99 take some getting used to. Stick at it, though, and you'll soon be taking corners as tight as you like.

RALLYING IS DIRTY AND DANGEROUS. OBVIOUSLY IT MAKES FOR TERRIFIC ENTERTAINMENT

↑ Uppers & ↓ Downers

Gears
■ Lots of cars to get to grips with
■ It looks lovely
■ And there's lots (and lots) of it

Tears
■ It takes a long time to master
■ No, really. It takes ages

New Nintendo 64 Games



■ There's no denying that Psygnosis was influenced by Nintendo's original F-Zero when it designed *WipEout*. Now F-Zero X has arrived, is there room for the pretender?

SPEED THRILLS

THE N64 RACING GAME GRID STARTS TO FILL UP...



WipEout 64

■ Publisher: Midway ■ Developer: Psygnosis
■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: January ■ Players: 1-4
■ Extras: Memory Pak, Rumble Pak

After much behind-the-scenes wrangling, *WipEout* makes its Nintendo debut. But with *F-Zero X* already scorching N64's all over the country, is there really any need for it?

There can be no other game that sums up the PlayStation as succinctly as *WipEout*. Indeed, without Psygnosis' futuristic racer showing the world exactly what PlayStation's graphics hardware was capable of, it's very possible that Sony wouldn't be in the enviable position it's in today. You need games like *WipEout* to start momentum building, and that's exactly what it did. Its funky mix of speed, realism, futurism and, of course, the most fashionable soundtrack ever to grace a videogame, helped leave Sega stuck in the blocks with the Saturn, and Sony safely past step one of its plan to dominate the world.

Three years and a PlayStation sequel later, *WipEout* has turned up in a completely new form on the N64 – Sony's

latest arch rival. How much of a rumpus this has caused between Psygnosis and its major shareholder, Sony, can be measured in the game's traumatic birth.

Originally slated for a November release on Psygnosis' own label, Sony wasn't happy with the idea of a company that it owns a large stake in making games for the opposition. Pressure was brought to bear and *WipEout* was touted around most of the world's leading publishers, until Midway finally stumped up enough cash to secure it. By the time the situation had been sorted out, however, the game had missed its all-important manufacturing slot at Nintendo's plant, cancelling its Christmas.

But now it's finally here. So let's take a look and see what we've got.

Building from PlayStation's *WipEout 2097*, *WipEout 64* has seven new tracks and an all-new soundtrack. It uses much the same race structure as the PlayStation game, in which five racing teams compete Grand Prix-style using a range of futuristic hover, floaty spaceships. These spaceships start off fairly easy to pilot, but quickly become trickier – it's the time-honoured trade-off between speed and handling – as you advance. And if more proof were still needed that Nintendo's analogue stick offers the finest game control yet, it's here. Gamers who spent frustrating hours mastering *WipEout 2097*'s digital directional control

Uppers & Downers

After burner
■ Great soundtrack
■ Fantastic analogue control

Heart burner
■ Fewer tracks than competition
■ More clipping than any other N64 game
■ A bit dated

will revel in the smooth, precise, more natural analogue handling on offer here. Taking corners is a far more instinctive affair than it was on PlayStation, even if the penalties for touching the sides are as harsh as ever (experienced *F-Zero X* fans will find this aspect a particularly teeth-grating experience).

Where *WipEout 64* really pulls ahead of its previous PlayStation versions, however, is in its two-, three- or four-player split-screen games. These add a much-needed human element to an otherwise fairly dry concept. The two-player option is by far the best, losing the least trackside detail and speed, while enabling players to make maximum use of the game's missiles, quake disruptors and other power-ups. Four-player is great fun, too – even if the game's restrictive PAL borders reduce each player's individual screen to postage stamp proportions.

Six months ago, the N64 had a shortage of serious racing games. With the recent release of *F1 World Grand Prix*, *V-Rally*, *Extreme G2* and *F-Zero X* – and with *Top Gear Overdrive* also on the horizon – there's now a dogfight for

WIPEOUT REVELS IN WOWING THE PLAYER WITH PRETTY BACKDROPS

the top spot. The main competition to *WipEout 64* has to be Nintendo's *F-Zero X* which, with its 24 tracks and random track generator, appears to have *WipEout 64* on the run. *F-Zero X* is also faster, smoother and, with 29 other craft all racing at the same time, far more action packed.

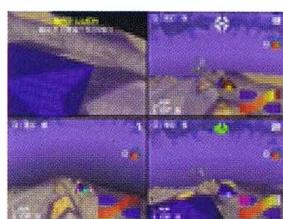
However, Psygnosis' old champion has two trump cards that keep it in contention. First, while *F-Zero*'s tracks have been created at the expense of background detail, *WipEout* positively revels in throwing around extraneous detail and wowing the player with pretty backdrops. It looks great. Second, its system of defensive and offensive power-ups – while hardly an innovation – adds lots to the multiplayer modes, even against the CPU, that you might miss in *F-Zero*.

So buy it if you like *F-Zero X* and want more that's similar, or if you simply want to see what all the fuss was about back in '95. It may not be the best racing game out there, but it's really not bad at all. ★★★ James Ashton

Or you could try...

F-Zero X
Nintendo ****
Fastest game in the world. 24 tracks and a random track generator. Superb.

XG2: Extreme G2
Acclaim ***
Improved update of original. Great multiplayer and battle mode. Somewhat soulless.



One obvious advantage *WipEout 64* has over its PlayStation cousins is its simultaneous four-player split-screen option.



■ Looks great, but hard to control. (We're talking about the game.)



Uppers & Downers

Extreme	■ Top-notch graphics and sounds ■ Picks up quite a speed
Obscene	■ Horrendous slow-down at points ■ Lacks a proper feeling of being in control

G WHIZZ

IT SURE LOOKS PRETTY

XG2: Extreme G 2

■ Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment ■ Developer: Probe ■ Price: £40 ■ Release date: on sale now
■ Players: 1-4

A year on from speedy motorbike space-racer *Extreme G*, the time has come for Acclaim to cash in on its success. The sequel's got the looks, the sounds and the speed. But how does it play?

And so the repeating cycle of futuristic racers goes on. *F-Zero* on the Super Nintendo invented them (in the modern era, at least), *WipEout* made them cool and *Extreme G* updated them for the N64. Now, with Nintendo's machine host to both *F-Zero X* and *WipEout 64*, it's Acclaim's turn to prove itself again with *Extreme G*'s sequel.

From the beginning of the first race, where the space-age motorbikes shimmer in the glow of pulsating neon lights, and a distant loudspeaker warns riders to "stand by", there's no doubting that here we have a visual feast. And it's fast – the speed dial has been turned down slightly since episode one, but the twisting, looping and sinister tracks still whip by at a face-flapping velocity.

Almost inevitably, though, Probe's love of cosmetics has suffocated the actual game. The use of distant fog helps maintain speed and masks pop-up, but obscures the view of the track ahead. Despite this, the presence of a few other bikes on screen is enough to cause the frame rate to plummet, and using any of the missile-based weapons almost brings proceedings to a complete halt.

Somewhere, though, buried beneath this graphical hotch-potch, is some exhilarating racing with your computer opponents providing decent competition without dishonest bursts of acceleration. Get a bit of speed up (and avoid anything that might slow the graphics down), and you'll really feel like you're racing.

Sadly, though, there's the niggling feeling (as you rebound off wall after wall), that you're not completely in control of your vehicle. And oddly, with the bikes now able to drive the wrong way round the track, a high-speed trackside-clip results in the vehicle stopping dead and flipping 180° to face the oncoming traffic. As the game's jerkiness occasionally makes keeping to the track near-impossible, this happens more often than you'd like.

It's this sort of irritating and unnecessary element that makes *XG2* a missed opportunity. With racing veteran *F-Zero X* sticking two fingers up at young pretenders such as this and *WipEout 64*, there's simply no need to put up with *XG2*'s assortment of frustrating niggles, faults and flaws. ★★★

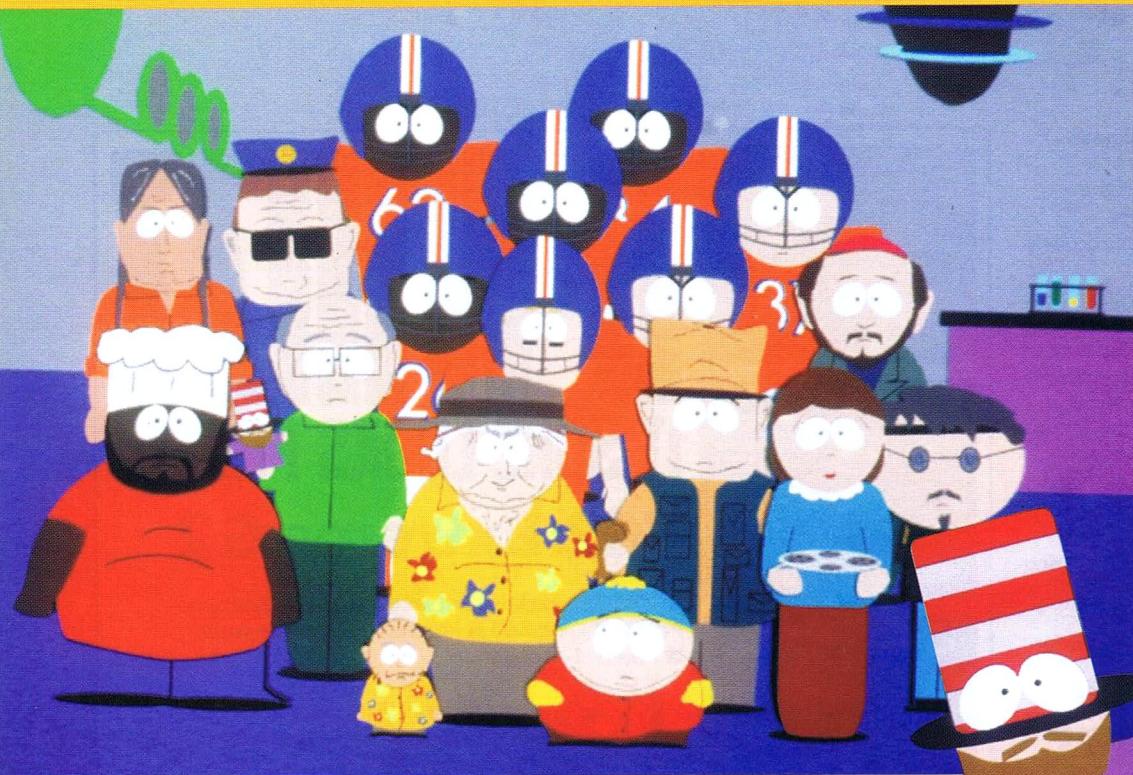
Mark Green

Or you could try...

F-Zero X
Nintendo ****
If you like your racing fast and futuristic, this is the boy for you.

WipEout 64
Midway ***
Not a match for *F-Zero 64*, but still good, as the review on the opposite page says.

New Nintendo 64 Games



The TV show's introduction is recreated for the start of the game, complete with batsarse theme song and all your favourite characters.

PARK LIFE

THEY'RE HERE, AND THEY KNOW MORE SWEAR WORDS THAN YOU

South Park

■ Publisher: Acclaim Entertainment ■ Developer: Iguana ■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: February ■ Players: 1-4 ■ Extras: Rumble Pak, Memory Pak, 4Mb Expansion Pak

We all had reason to be worried when Iguana promised to knock out *South Park* in a few short months. Can this hastily-built 3D shooter realise the potential of the TV show's demented genius?

Videogames make you swear. There's no getting away from it. Ever since *Pong*, frustrated gameplayers have been turning the air such a potent shade of blue that even Dulux's Super Blue #143 ("Now That's What I Call Blue") can't match it. But *South Park* is probably the first time you'll hear a videogame swearing at you. Watching Kenny's decapitated head disappearing down an iguana's gullet on the intro screen, and then hearing Stan yell, "This is pretty f-bleep!-ked up right here," (yes, the "fucked" is beeped out, presumably at Nintendo's bidding) and then, "You bastards!" will have you frantically turning the volume down in case the neighbours are listening. But, at the same time, you'll be giggling like a school-girl.



Your radar (bottom left of the screen) shows you where your friends and enemies are as you wander around.

If you're not sure why witnessing small children shout "Ass-licker!" and "I... am... so... pissed" is hilarious, go and read our *South Park* history on page 32. Done that? Still can't see the humour? Then you'll probably never appreciate how incredibly funny Iguana's game can be. Each character has a bulging inventory of perfectly-sampled cusses to direct at enemies, and they explode out of your TV's speaker at every opportunity. Simply throwing snowballs, say, at one of the four main characters over and over again, resulting in a barrage of swearing and four-letter name calling, is almost a game's worth of entertainment in itself.

Another great thing about *South Park* the game is its 3D world. Utilising Iguana's state-of-the-art *Turok 2* engine, the leap from two dimensions to three has been made with ease. The characters look great in 3D and lose nothing of their 2D personas. All the familiar buildings and landmarks are here, too, and it's fun simply wandering around *South Park* exploring the place for yourself. It's a bit like visiting the Granada TV studios and taking a walk down Coronation Street.

But there's a but. In fact, there are two big buts (and I'm not talking about Cartman and his mum).

↑ Uppers & ↓ Downers

First class
■ The world looks great in 3D
■ Brilliant cut-scenes and hilarious speech
■ Enjoyable (kinda) multi-player deathmatch

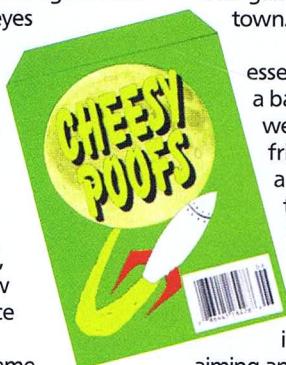
Dumb ass
■ The levels lack variety, and even repeat in places
■ The best characters only appear in multiplayer
■ All you have to do is walk forward and press the fire button

The first major problem is the actual game – it's boring. If you need a point of reference for the gameplay, think *Space Invaders*. On each of the game's 20-something levels, hordes of identical-looking enemies launch themselves toward you, single file, waiting to be shot. You oblige, walk a little bit further, and the same thing happens again. And again. And it goes on for hours, until your eyes are drooping and your trigger finger is hanging limply from its joint. Over the hour or so that it takes to complete level one, for example, all you'll see in the way of enemies is a baby turkey, a mummy turkey and the boss – a great big, the-whole-family's-coming-over-for-Christmas-dinner daddy of a turkey.

Eventually, you'll reach the end of a level, start the next one, enjoy – briefly – the new scenery and weapon, but then descend once more into the quagmire of tedium that is blasting an infinite number of exactly the same thing. Even the weapons are a disappointment. There are toilet plungers and cow launchers, which sound fun enough, but in actual fact all do pretty much the same thing – and have none of the anarchic, blood-soaked, I shouldn't-be-laughing-at-this-but-I-can't-help-it nastiness of the TV show. Which brings me on to my second big criticism...

This game. It sounds like *South Park*. It looks like *South Park*. But is sure as hell doesn't feel like *South Park*.

Take the game world itself. Like I said, wondering around looking at the scenery is interesting enough. But what do you get to do? Almost nothing. Why can't you smash the windows of the houses with snowballs? Why can't you go and find any of the other *South Park* characters? Why can't



you swear at passers by? Why can't you have any fun?

This is a license that cries out for a game that lets you explore off the beaten path. Then it wouldn't matter if the missions were dull and repetitive. The game world of *South Park* should be a living, breathing city – full of distractions, sub-games and cool things to do – but instead it's a ghost town. And a terrible waste of an opportunity.

Luckily, if the one-player game has ignored the essence of *South Park*, then the multi-player has filled a bath with it and jumped right in. The disappointing weapons remain, but the chance for you and three friends to each pick a character and then run around shooting (and swearing) at each other is very welcome. If only it didn't creak along at a frame rate so slow that aiming and moving become almost impossible, it would rescue the whole thing.

So where does this leave us? For die-hard fans of the TV show there is enough here to entertain. Just. For the rest, look no further than the reaction of all those who have crept into the Arcade office to see it. They laugh at first – at Chef's cut-scenes, at the swearing – and then, after a few minutes of watching the game descend into monotony, they wander away. "That's a shame," they mutter as they slouch off. And the motherf-bleep!-king, ass-licking bastards are f-bleep!-king right. ★★

Mark Green

IT LOOKS LIKE SOUTH PARK. IT SOUNDS LIKE SOUTH PARK. BUT IT DOESN'T FEEL LIKE SOUTH PARK



■ It's a shame that the game world in *South Park* is static. What makes a great videogame is not so much what you see as what you get to do. Unfortunately, all you get to do in *South Park* is wonder around throwing things at armies of enemies.

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New Nintendo 64 Games



S.C.A.R.S.

■ Publisher: **Ubisoft**
■ Developer: **Vivid Image**
■ Price: £49.99 ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: 1-4
■ Extras: **Controller Pak, Rumble Pak**

Super Computer Animal Racing: the strangest acronym in the world rolls into town. It's up against some frighteningly stiff opposition, though.

If you were around in the days of SNES vs Mega Drive you should remember a game called *Street Racer*. Built as Ubisoft's answer to *Mario Kart*, it boasted a set of similar go-karts, racing on a set of similar tracks. Where the French pretender differed to Nintendo's masterpiece was in attitude; it had much nastier characters, bigger weapons and not a single cute green dinosaur in sight. It was also not nearly as good.

Playing S.C.A.R.S. brings back *Street Racer* memories. The titular "Super Computer Animal Racing" translates to a set of nine giant animal-based four-wheel-drive "things", racing around nine tracks, each trying to finish first while trying to blow the obligatory seven shades out of one another. In 64-bit glory, of course. The proceedings are in lush 3D and the weapons – a mixture of pick-up missiles and lay-down traps – explode in Technicolor splendour. However, despite the fact that – without resorting to fog effects – designer Vivid Image has done an admirable job at preventing any pop-up during the races, *Street Racer*'s old problem has come back to haunt the game.

With any racer, success starts with the handling authenticity of the craft you're driving. In *Street Racer*'s case, it felt as if your kart was being held stationary in the centre of the screen, and your left and right controls were altering the orientation of the track around it; the game always felt as if you were racing on the spot. In S.C.A.R.S., where the controlled car never moves from the centre of the screen, you'll feel that same disorientating experience.

Get over this though, and S.C.A.R.S. is an enjoyable, though imperfect, one-player affair. There are plenty of tactics to master, and the game's scoring system – based on power-up use and race times – ensures there's plenty to come back to. Where S.C.A.R.S. excels, however, is in its two, three and four-player modes. Providing that each of your opponents has a good working knowledge of the game, there's an excellent

Bust-a-Move 3 DX

■ Publisher: **Acclaim Entertainment** ■ Developer: **Distinctive Developments** ■ Price: £40 ■ Release date: **on sale now** ■ Players: 1-4

Gaming goes back to basics with the third – and best – Nintendo edition of the bubble-burster...

If you've never played *Bust-A-Move*, here's how it works: you have a split screen, and each side is full of coloured balls. You shoot further randomly coloured balls up to the balls at the top of your half of the screen. Match three like-coloured balls and they vanish.

Bust-A-Move is a work of simplistic genius. The gameplay of version 2 on the N64 was just as remarkable, but the package lacked shine. This threequel has come straight from the arcades, fresh-faced and all-new, so any twists have been made with the N64 in mind.

There's a new hi-res four-player mode (although the rest of the game is in normal viewing format), where four ball-packed rectangles sit side-by-side, and also a Story mode. And, while this mode – where the number of rounds you win against the too-easy CPU opponent affects the direction the tale takes – might not necessarily appeal to everyone, it does mean that *Bust-A-Move 3* has lots of extra playing options missing from its predecessor.

The game also includes two two-player games. Arcade is a quick-draw best of three and the snappily monickered Two-Player has unlimited rounds, effectively enabling you to burst bubbles until one (or both) of you reaches retirement age.

So no, it isn't an amazing all-singing, all-dancing 3D epic, but, should you manage to pick it up on the cheap, *Bust-A-Move 3* is a burst of fresh air. Aahhh.

★★★ Tim Weaver

Or you could try...

Tetrisphere
THE ★★★
A brave, but ultimately flawed attempt to take Tetris into 3D.

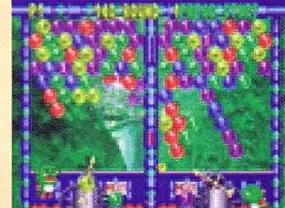
Wetrix
Ocean ★★★★
Getting watered down take on Tetris. Yet again.

Uppers & Downers

Buster
■ Simple and yet still so effortlessly engrossing
■ New four-player mode
■ Lots more extra modes

Blister
■ Lack of a really taxing computer challenge
■ Too single-minded to be to everyone's tastes, perhaps

MOVEY KIND OF LOVE ANYTHING BUT A LOAD OF OLD BALLS...



The two-player version of *Bust-A-Move 3* is as insanely addictive as ever, but it's the extra options in 3 – including Story and the hi-res four-player – that add some new fun.

multi-player experience to be had. Okay, it's not up to the standards of *Mario Kart* or *F-Zero X*, but it's better than *Diddy Kong Racing*.

As racers go this Christmas, *F-Zero X*, *V-Rally '99*, *F1 World Grand Prix* and *1080°* all out-gun S.C.A.R.S. But if you're looking for something that's a little different – especially when it comes to the control methods – you could do a lot worse. ★★★ James Ashton



WCW Vs NWO Revenge

■ Publisher: **THQ** ■ Developer: **Asmik** ■ Price: £40
■ Release date: **on sale now**
■ Players: 1-4

We know you're waiting for a load of jokes about greasy men in Spandex pants, but we couldn't stoop so low.



So, here's another game based around Spandex-clad, half-naked, muscle-laden, greasy blokes, all pretending to smack each other up. Inexplicably, every game of this nature enters the charts at number one, giving the publishers that produce them a license to keep churning out half-cocked,

ill-conceived updates of previous titles. THQ – whose livelihood depends entirely on its grappling titles – is a big offender.

WCW Vs NWO Revenge is a '98 update of *WCW/NWO World Tour*. The graphics are much the same, with only the crowd and "wrestler entrances" showing any extra detail. There are some more opponent-battering weapons to grab from the crowd, but there's little chance to take advantage of them. The inclusion of almost 100 characters just makes up for the lack of a create-a-player mode – of the sort you'd find in Acclaim's *WWF Warzone*. But only just.

A much-needed injection of speed saves the game from a complete drubbing, though. The wrestlers skate about the ring and execute moves at a pace, pulling off their limited actions as though late for an appointment at the greasing salon. Unfortunately, the matches themselves haven't been invited to this speed party, and can stretch on for anything up to a painfully drawn-out 20 minutes.

Still, there're plenty of options, tournaments and hidden characters,

and the bone-crunching nature of the fights is satisfying. Also in *Revenge*'s favour is the multi-player mode, which provides more laughs per play than *Postman's Knock* – any game that offers the opportunity to grab a large man's legs and pull them apart at the crotch can't help but be funny.

However, it took us just a few hours of play to extract and beat all the secret tournaments and characters. After that, even with the host of features that make short-term play more interesting (mid-fight appearances by other wrestlers, a handful of special moves), *Revenge* is like a Hulk Hogan movie – okay to dip into, but liable to bring on a coma if you spend more than an hour in front of it. ★★★ Simon Garner





NBA Jam 99

■ Publisher: Acclaim
Entertainment Iguana ■ Developer: Entertainment Iguana ■ Price: £45 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: 1-4

There's a basket. There's a ball. And there's a jolly green-haired giant called Dennis. Just what kind of a crazy sport is this?

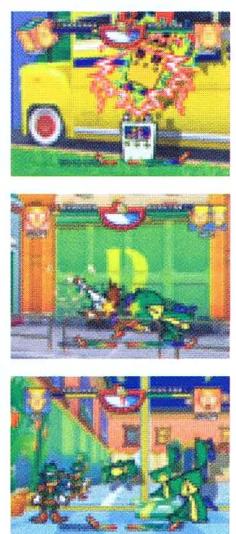
■ You'd have a pretty hard time convincing the average Briton of this, but once basketball gets into its stride, it's a surprisingly fast, exciting and addictive sport. It still includes plenty of frustrating aspects, but because it's one of America's least plodding games, a skillful developer can plonk it into a videogame that's worth playing.

In terms of options, bells and whistles, *Jam* won't disappoint even the most anal basketball fanatic. You can alter time-outs, travelling rules and foul options at will, call up action replays from a customisable camera at any time, and the *Jam* option supplies fast-paced, flames-on-the-ball arcade action. It's all rendered in über-detailed hi-res, and the motion-captured players look and play like their leggy real-life equivalents.

Jam's controls are more complicated than those of, say, *Courtside*, but they are intuitive and comprehensive, and make guiding your beanpoles around the court, passing and calling plays, more akin to the real game. Actually getting the ball in the hoop is trickier than it should be, and it mysteriously vanishes from time to time, reappearing halfway down the court, but the feeling of control is admirable.

But if attacking is a dream, defending is a nightmare. Iguana has created CPU opponents who are equal in ability to the Dream Team which "whups everybody's ass" at the Olympics. And as you struggle to make out which player you're controlling, your N64 will be stretching its lead to triple-figures.

Jam 99 is a game you need to work at. Over time, defending becomes easier, and matches less like the basketball equivalent of ping-pong. It's hard, but it's good to see a sports game where you need to put in some real effort to win. ★★★★ *Simon Garner*



■ Pit your crayon and spray paint creations against each other in a battle to the waxy end.

WAX-ON WAX-OFF

MARTIAL ARTS WITH A WHOLE NEW, CRAYON-WIELDING MEANING

Rakuga Kids

■ Publisher: Konami ■ Developer: Konami
 ■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
 ■ Players: 1-2

Originally thought to be too quirky for straight-thinking Western folk, Konami brings you the world's first, only and (probably) last graffiti-based fighter.

The wait for that *Tekken*-matching N64 beat-'em-up continues. But while you're biding your time over the long months ahead you could do a lot worse than to sample something that doesn't even try to take on the established Namco and Capcom grand masters at their own game. And that something could be *Rakuga Kids*.

But first of all you've got to make sure your understanding of fighting is broad enough to include snot-bubble blowing teddy bears that turn into tanks, rotating chicken hat weapons and, in fact, the whole premise of a set of 2D kid's drawings laying into each other.

The main protagonists are graffiti-spraying kids, but the one-on-one fighting takes place between their drawings. In looks, it's similar to *PaRappa the Rapper*, although there's also a touch of *Yoshi's Island* about the whole game.

And the inventiveness doesn't stop there. The characters' special attacks, traditionally a

time where beat-'em-ups descend into fireballs and blood spilling, involve drawing something dangerous (like dynamite) and setting it on an opponent.

On paper, at least, the fighting system that's buried underneath all that crayon is surprisingly solid, too, following the classic light, medium and heavy punch and kick approach pioneered by *Street Fighter 2*. The only real problem comes from the cartoon cut-out nature of the seven characters on offer. They float about, they blow trumpets instead of throwing punches and, with all manner of animated nonsense occurring on screen, it's difficult to see if any damage is actually being done. Some *Tom and Jerry*, or better still, *Itchy and Scratchy*-like grief here wouldn't have gone amiss.

That said, if you can embrace the fact that it veers alarming from traditional scrapping territory into a candy coloured world of its own, there's plenty to like about *Rakuga Kids*. It's got a lot of ways to play, including a story option and a training mode that lets you coach a character and then have him fight the CPU without your input. On sheer imagination alone, *Rakuga* is intriguingly different enough to be worth a curious look, and adds strength to the humble crayon's role as the writing implement of the insane. ★★★ *Robin Alway*

Uppers & Downers

Aerosol art
 ■ Imaginative characters and moves
 ■ Surprisingly sound fighting
 ■ Completely unique

Bunch of arse
 ■ Not fighting as you know it
 ■ Indistinct blows
 ■ Possibly a bit too unique
 ■ Gets very jerky

Or you could try...

Fighters Destiny
Infogrames ★★★★
Not quite Tekken, but still the best N64 fight going.

Yoshi's Story
Nintendo ★★★★
Childlike platforming, but all over criminally soon.

Other Systems

SHARKY'S MACHINE SWIM, FISHIES. SWIM FOR YOUR LIVES!

COIN-OP

Ocean Hunter

■ Maker: Sega ■ Developer: Sega Am1
■ Release date: out now ■ Players: 1-2

Twenty-four years after the seminal *Jaws* put most of us off a casual dip at Brighton beach, Sega has decided that it's still not safe to go back in the water. Thanks, guys.

Ocean Hunter is pretty similar to last year's light-gun based shooting game, *House of the Dead*. Except that this time you're armed with a giant, cabinet-mounted whale-catcher. Oh, and you're under-water.

So, having donned your virtual wetsuit, it's time to dive into one of seven levels, representing the seven seas. Your simple task: to shoot everything that moves – jellyfish, barracuda, you know the sort of

thing – until you reach the end of level boss, which will be something like a great white shark or giant squid. These bosses are a lot better than the levels, because, let's face it, anyone could have a jellyfish in a one-on-one.

Though developed on a posh Model 3 Step 2.1 board, *Ocean Hunter*'s graphics don't maximise the hardware's potential. The plot is less than inspiring, too. Indeed, compared to *House of the Dead* – in which you blasted your way through a mansion backed with zombies – *Ocean Hunter* feels decidedly soggy. Perhaps it's because zombie blasting is an intrinsically exciting thing to do (as *Resident Evil* proved), while shooting a bunch of hapless cod is always going to be less sexy. Don't ask why, it just is.

Ocean Hunter is clearly no *Time Crisis 2*, then, but you never know: it may garner a small following at seaside arcades. Or in Hull, perhaps. ★

Cam Anderson



■ *Ocean Hunter*: frankly, we're a little unsure about the ethics of swaggering around the ocean, blasting anything that moves.

GLOVES OFF RETRO MULTI-BADDIE FUN, NOW IN 3D



Gauntlet Legends

■ Maker: Atari ■ Developer: Team Gauntlet
■ Release date: out now ■ Players: 1-4

Remember *Gauntlet*? Now the frantic monster-packed 2D top-down runaround gets a fresh look.

For coin-op stalwarts, news of a fresh release from Atari still gets the juices flowing. The company went through a lean period a few years back, but its renaissance has brought us *Primal Rage*, the hugely successful *Area 51* and the underrated *San Francisco Rush*. And anyway, these are the guys who once came up with the likes of *Asteroids* and *BattleZone*, so give 'em a break.

Now, following popular culture's continuing taste for all things retro (in the world of videogames, witness the successes of various compendium titles

released for PlayStation), the company has completely revised and revisited one of its all-time classics.

Gauntlet Legends takes the original concept (exploring an assortment of deadly dungeons in the small-scale guise of a wizard, warrior, valkyrie or archer, grabbing loot and beating the living shit out of anything that might voice an objection) and runs with it. The most obvious change is that the 2D sprites of old have been replaced by 3D polygon characters – but the emphasis is still on swarms and swarms of small enemies, rather than two or three big ones. And make no mistake, there are a lot of bodies being shifted at once here – most with the sole aim of ending your life.

Your goal in *Gauntlet Legends* is to collect 12 runes over the first four stages (that's 35 levels in total). If you make it, you'll be awarded entry to the final level, where things really heat up and the true beauty of *Gauntlet* – you and three mates huddled around hurling abuse at each other for not saving each other's arses, or for pinching live-giving potions that "rightfully" belonged to someone else – comes into its own. It's frantic, we're-all-in-this-together fun.

It all adds up to a bloody good game. I'll end on a tip, though. If you can help it, don't pick one of the green characters. Why? Because it's often difficult to tell them from the monsters, which – if the buddy you're playing with ain't the smartest guy in the world – can be seriously damaging to your health. ★★★★

Cam Anderson



■ Get ready for yet another trip down gaming's memory lane.



MACINTOSH

Tomb Raider II

■ Publisher: Aspyr Media
■ Developer: Westlake ■ Price: £39.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1 ■ Requires: 80MHz PowerMac, 20MB RAM, 4x CD-ROM drive ■ Recommended: 3Dfx or QuickDraw 3D RAVE accelerator card

Lara Croft finally makes her debut on Mac (the original is being worked on now; III may come later). But is her stock-in-trade ample chest/tight arse combo enough to hold the attention span of the supposedly more cerebral Macintosh gamer?

■ The games industry has probably spawned its fair share of 20th century icons – Mario, Sonic, and, of course, Lara Croft, the swashbuckling female archeologist with the tight top and the amazing pair of pistols. She's everywhere at the moment – even on the Mac, though while everyone else is playing *Tomb Raider III*, we have to make do with last year's version. Don't worry, though – we Mac folk are used to it.

Tomb Raider II is, of course, a 3D shoot-'em and solve-'em game. You're the agile, nubile Lara on a mission to recover an ancient Chinese artifact. After some basic training on the assault course at Lara's country mansion (where you're followed round, somewhat disturbingly, by a nervous, farting butler, complete with wobbly tea tray), it's off to the Great Wall of China in search of clues to the McGuffin's whereabouts. There follows an array of increasingly exotic locations, from Venice to the Arctic Circle, all packed with new bad guys and weapons to shoot them with.

It's fun, of course. There are spike pits, giant boulders, whirling blades and flame throwers to negotiate, ivy-covered walls to climb and deep underwater caverns to swim through. The puzzles are a genuine challenge, the graphics are superb and the whole thing will run on your bog-standard PowerMac – though it won't look its very best unless you have a 3Dfx or QuickDraw 3D RAVE card.

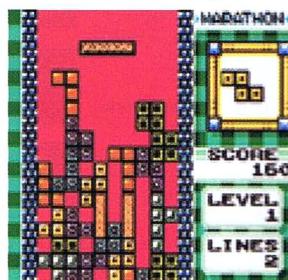
The one flaw is with the control system, which uses the keyboard exclusively and is not terribly accurate. But once Lara's fallen off the same ledge for the fourth time you'll learn to save your game between each jump... ★★★ Lindsay Bruce

GAME BOY COLOR

TECHNI-COLOR

MORE MEATY MULTI-CHROMATIC RELEASES

Last month's initial batch of Game Boy Color releases were nifty for the technology on display, but not exactly top name games. This time round, however, the big guns come out to play. By Robin Alway.



Tetris DX

■ Publisher: Nintendo
■ Developer: Nintendo
■ Price: £19.99 ■ Release date: on sale now ■ Players: 1-2 (with link cable)

You know those falling blocks you get behind your eyelids after a six-hour *Tetris* session? Now they're going to be in colour. Aaaarrgh!

■ Changing something as perfect as *Tetris* is like tinkering with the rules of association football or undertaking a *Changing Rooms*-style redecoration of the Sistine Chapel. It's not to be advised and obviously completely unnecessary. Thankfully, other than splashing around a bit of colour, introducing a few new modes and (horror!) ditching the original's commuter-maddening Russian tune, this is the same old *Tetris* that, in the process of helping to shift 70 million Game Boys worldwide, has become easily the planet's single most-played videogame.

Now it might not sound like much, but the best new thing about *Tetris DX* (possibly to be called *New Color Tetris* in the UK) is not the added tones, but its ability to save high scores. A new battery-backed-up stats screen keeps a total of the number of lines you make disappear, and can be used to prove, once and for all, that your girlfriend is better at the game than you. Chiz.

Other than that, all the new options work well, and colour cheers things up a bit. But this is essentially the same game that it always was. It's timeless. It's fantastic. And that zigzag shape is still a complete git. ★★★★



Rampage World Tour

■ Publisher: Midway
■ Developer: Digital Eclipse
■ Release date: January
■ Price: £24.99 ■ Players: 1-2 (with link cable)

Portable nostalgia, anyone? The last time these big old monsters ruled the Earth, Duran Duran were cool.

■ Tri-linear mip-mapping? Pah! This hoary old gaming gimmer has been around since before polygons were invented. And, since its first appearance, there's been no change to its 2D movie monster characters and city-smashing gameplay. It's almost charmingly simple. In the guise of either King Kong, Godzilla or Wolf Man look-alikes, your goal is to level a succession of world capitals by punching skyscrapers, while maintaining your energy levels by eating the inhabitants and avoiding bullets from tiny helicopters.

But misty eyed reminiscences are soon cut brutally short. The graphics here are never substantial enough to capture the cartoonish humour of the original, and the monsters, in particular, move too jerkily to be endearing. Worse still, the multi-player mayhem that made the original so much fun is cruelly curtailed. Two-player games are possible with the link cable but, on your own (which is, let's face it, how most Game Boys are played), you'll tire quickly. Game Boy Color's an ideal platform for meaningful retro games, but this isn't how you'll want to remember one of gaming's most shameless old lags. ★



Mortal Kombat 4

■ Developer: Digital Eclipse
■ Publisher: Midway
■ Release date: January
■ Price: £24.99 ■ Players: 1

Spine removals! Painful decapitations! Knee-bending-the-wrong-way hilarity! Can you tell what game it is yet?

■ Here we go again. *Mortal Kombat* has turned up in one form or another on just about every piece of game playing kit ever able to process a "Finish him" sound sample and show the colour red. The Psion Organiser's probably got a version. So it's no surprise that *Mortal Kombat* is back to make a nuisance of itself on the Game Boy Color.

Some moody beeping, a less than terrifying evil laugh and you're thrown headlong into familiar gothic scrapping territory. Although on PlayStation and N64 this fourth MK saw the introduction of 3D fighters and weapons, on the Game Boy it's back to the disappointingly familiar slideshow-like animation and tatty feel that always gifted status as world's greatest 2D beat-'em-up to *Street Fighter*.

The only real surprise is that, aside from the fatalities, the fights are blood free. This is probably just as well when you see the trouble the programmers have had getting two large characters moving quickly on screen at the same time, before they've even started to think about adding pumping arteries. All told, MK4's a pale imitator of its PlayStation cousin, despite its full-colour status. ★



NFL Blitz

■ Developer: Digital Eclipse
■ Publisher: Midway
■ Release date: January
■ Price: £24.99 ■ Players: 1

Fourth down, six yards to go and 56 colours on screen. American football hut-hut-huts its way on to the Game Boy Color with a surprising amount of style.

■ American football. A big game, played by large men according to a vast number of rules. There's a lot to fit onto a Game Boy cart, so *NFL Blitz* economises by fielding seven-aside teams (usually there are 11 players on each side) and eliminating all penalties. This is not a gridiron game that Dan Marino would recognise.

This wouldn't be so bad if it wasn't for the fact that this little brother of the PlayStation game we gave four stars last issue has been so sloppily coded. Okay, so the pitch is green (a big deal in these early days of colour handhelds), but the players are a state. Whenever members of the two teams stand close together, they flash on and off disconcertingly, making an already chaotic sport even more complicated. Keeping track of your players is, therefore, far more difficult than it should be.

If you can find it in yourself to forgive such nasty, slap-dash workmanship, there's a decent enough game lurking underneath. It's quick to get into and, because there is a lot of strategy involved in terms of plays and set calling (no, really – there is), the coaching side is tops. It's just a real shame the graphics aren't nearly as solid as the gameplay. ★★

On-line gaming



News

PROHIBITION HASN'T STOPPED ANYONE YET... PLAY IT AGAIN SCAM

Ancient arcade and home computer games are yours to play once more for free, as long as you have the right emulator. But is it legal?



MAME lets you play all those classic arcade games, like Space Invaders, Zaxxon and Sidearms. It's all pretty hard to resist, eh?

It is a truth universally held that games aren't as good as they used to be. Even in medieval times, when folk started kicking an inflated pig's bladder around the village green, there was at least one dissenting voice in the crowd suggesting that while this new-fangled bladder-kicking game was all well and good, it was nowhere near as much fun as burning witches.

The modern-day equivalent of ancient witch-roasting is playing ancient games in the firm belief that they're somehow better; and with an emulator you can do just that. Both the emulators and the games they run are freely available over the Internet. The old games come in the form of ROMs – software versions of the Read Only Memory information from the original arcade machines.

The first stop for most of your emulator needs is Dave's VideoGame Classics (<http://www.davesclassics.com/>). I say *most*; because until recently it was the place for *all* your emulator needs, but now the powers that be have started getting heavy-handed with poor old Dave and, while you can still find the emulators, the games are gone. Boo, and indeed, hiss. You could always try Classic Gaming (<http://www.classicgaming.com/>), which looks better than Dave's and still has ROMs, probably...

The question of the legality of downloading ancient arcade games is a tricky one. Technically, downloading an arcade game ROM that you don't own is illegal. In reality, though, most of the available games are long-dead and not making any money for their owners: there's a strong argument to the effect that by playing old games we give gaming a sense of history and importance, thus providing a solid foundation for the current industry. Without its hardcore fans, the games industry wouldn't exist – and so taking legal action against anybody celebrating their love of gaming is churlish. At least, that's what I think. And I reckon that's probably all the encouragement you'll need to grab a copy of the MAME (Multi Arcade Machine Emulator) from Dave's, or its official site at <http://mame.retrogames.com/>, then nab some of the 700-plus MAME-compatible ROMs from <http://www.romlist.com/>.

Ancient arcade games are always a laugh, but what of the games we all played as kids, on our Spectrums and Commodores? Well, they're still available too, and a great many of the authors of these old 8-bit classics have given their permission for their games to be distributed freely. If you were a Speccy kid like me, you'll want to get straight to the World of Spectrum (<http://www.void.demon.nl/spectrum.html>), which has everything; emulators, games, the lot. But if you were a C64 kid like me (yeah, I know, so nyer) you'll want to get over to Commodore Zone (<http://www.commodorezone.com/>) which also has everything; emulators, games, the lot.

Web Ring | Moving in circles

■ Try our circular journey through ten of the most peculiar Internet sites.

Fortean Times
<http://www.forteantimes.com/> ■ And round we go again.

UFO and alien images
<http://www.users.interport.net/regulus/alien/ufos.html>
■ Blurry, ill-focused pictures of frisbees, photos of genuine aliens and lots of weird links including...

UFOMind
<http://www.ufomind.com/>
■ UFOs, cover-ups – anything that might interest Mulder and Scully. Our investigation leads us to...

625
<http://625.simplenet.com/>
■ British TV and more, as well as a page on the site-stealing Web Snatcher, DR Van Staveren, also covered at...

Yahoo!
http://www.yahoo.com/entertainment/humor_jokes_and_fun/tasteless_humor/ate_my_balls

■ Ever considered the possibility of a character from pop culture gorging on your testicles? You'll find a link to it here. Yahoo! links to almost everything, such as...

sCary's Shuga Shack
<http://www.shugashack.com/>
■ Quake news is the main focus, but also check out daily sections, including The Suckage and the Wack Ass Links that take us to...

CD-ROM of the Month



literature and computer games, it's all here. There are even times – most notably in the Millennium Falcon walkthrough and the weapons testing bay – that you actually get a chance to venture inside the magic and interact with the *Star Wars* universe first hand.

Starting out from initial categories of Characters, Technology, Locations and Events, each subsequent mouse click unveils yet another menu, annotated diagram or chunk of information, while for hard-core fans there's also a chance to flick through the entire trilogy, scene by scene. If we had to criticise, then we'd mention the lack of interviews with the stars, and the rather lacklustre Episode 1 preview.

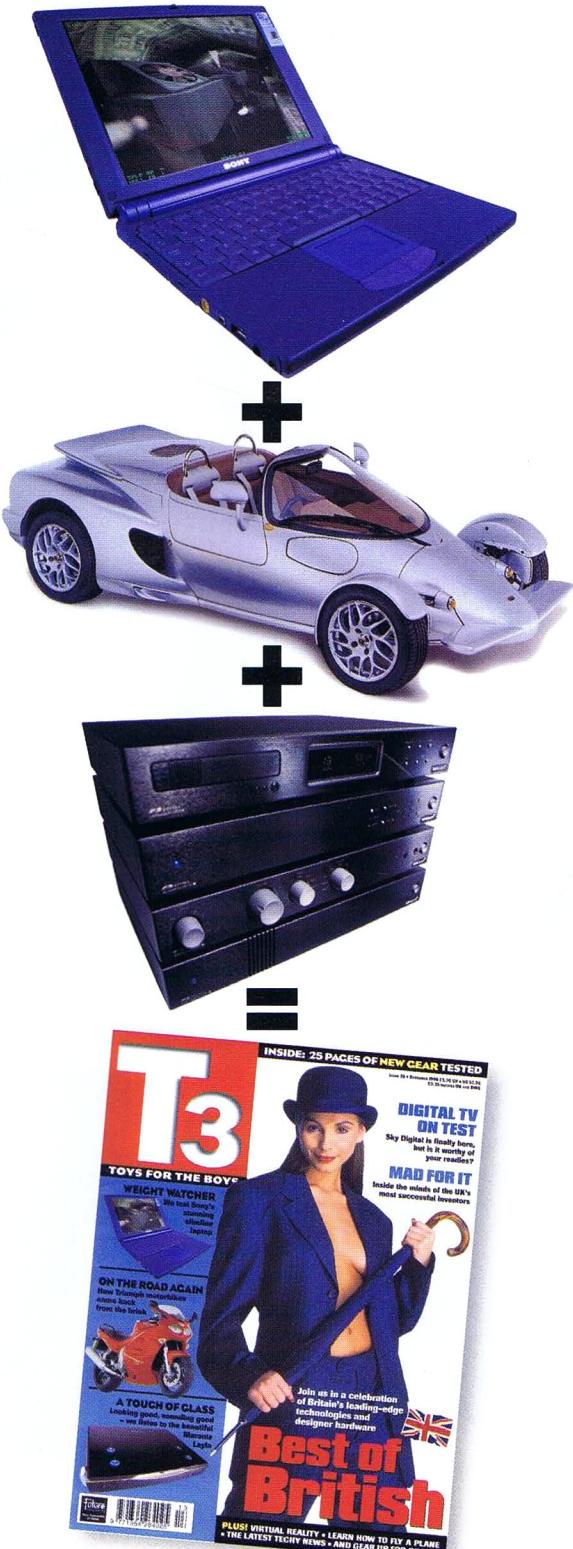
Yet it would be ill-fitting to turn this review to the Dark Side, for *Behind the Magic* is just about the ultimate *Star Wars* reference CD. Search your feelings, then search your wallet. ★★★★

Chris James

Star Wars: Behind the Magic

- Publisher: Activision
- Developer: LucasArts
- Price: £19.99
- Release date: **on sale now**
- Requires: P133, 16Mb RAM, 16-bit soundcard, Win 95

Try and think of just about any perspective you could possibly take upon the digital sorcery of *Star Wars* and this double-CD package has got it all covered. From classic film clips to crew interviews, from the absorbing mythos behind the story to the practicalities of film-making, and from the first draft of the early script to the merchandise,



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Accessories

1



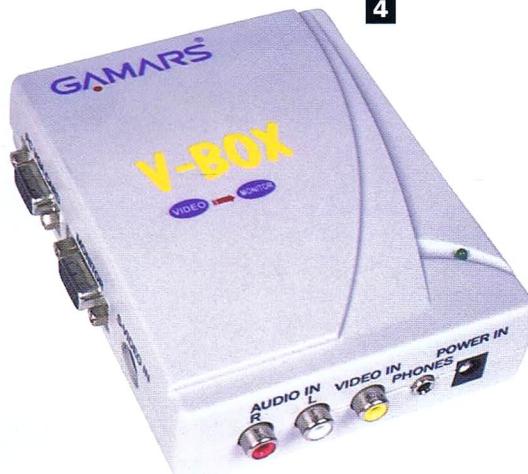
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3



4



1. Scorpion Light Gun

- Platform: PlayStation/Saturn
- Price: £24.99
- Available from: Blaze on 01302 325225

No ostentatious futuristic blast weaponry here – the Scorpion is shaped like a small Saturday Night Special automatic, the kind that people stick precariously into their jeans waistband in films.

It's small and not very heavy, making it easy on the forearms during lengthy gun-battles. It boasts recoil "jolt" effect when the gun is fired too, though at times this seems barely noticeable. All in all, a good buy: the right size, the right weight and, best of all, the right price. ★★★★

2. Top Gun Platinum Joystick

- Platform: PC
- Price: £34.99
- Available from: Inter Act/Thrustmaster on 01276 609955

This updated version of Thrustmaster's popular Top Gun joystick offers a more weighty base with a throttle wheel and a useful multi-view HAT switch under the thumb position.

It ain't quite perfect, though. The trigger switch is in a rather awkward position, and if anything the entire stick is a tad too small (wrapping your hand around feels uncomfortable). It's solid and precise, but only suitable for people with little hands. ★★★★

3. Gamester Steering Wheel & Rumble Pak

- Platform: N64
- Price: £59.99
- Available from: LMP on 01992 503133

The N64 isn't exactly renowned for its racing simulations, but the recent release of the ace *F1 World Grand Prix* gave us an excuse to hook up this wheel and attempt to nudge Michael Schumacher off the track. The Gamester is a sturdy old thing and is certainly up to the job of coping with the harshest treatment you're likely to dish out, but it's noticeably less effective when you need subtler handling. Still, it's better than driving with a joypad. ★★★★

4. V-Box

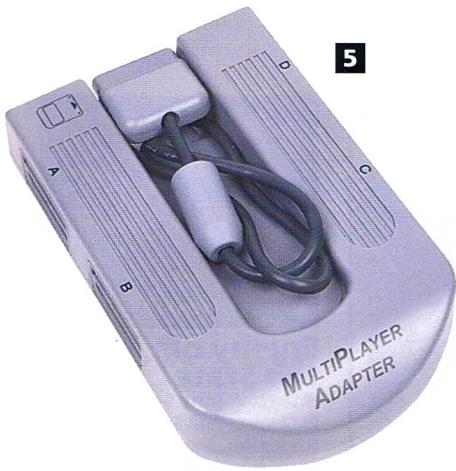
- Platform: PlayStation/N64
- Price: £59.99
- Available from: Gamas on 01908 660770

For hardcore gamers who like to have their PC and consoles set up in the same place (or, indeed, everyone who wants to have a sneaky game of *GoldenEye 007* in their lunch hour), the V-Box is manna from heaven. Simply plug your PlayStation or N64 into the V-Box and then connect it straight to your Mac or PC monitor – you don't need a TV.

The V-Box is both PAL and NTSC compatible and supports a VGA frequency of 31.5KHz; so it should work perfectly on most

up-to-date monitors, but anything cheap or more than a couple of years old may prove a problem. Don't be surprised at the slightly poorer picture quality of console games on a monitor – this is nothing to do with the V-Box, it's just that monitors work in higher resolution than TVs and so magnify any imperfections.

The price of the V-Box may deter casual buyers, but it's a great idea all the same – and cheaper than a new telly. ★★★★



5



7



6



8

5. MultiPlayer Adaptor

- Platform: PlayStation
- Price: £19.99
- Available from: Performance on 0161 702 5000

Straightforward hardware like this either works or it doesn't. Fortunately, Performance's MultiPlayer Adaptor – enabling up to four players to play suitable PlayStation games simultaneously – does work, and it's also competitively priced, so we're going to have to pick holes in its appearance instead. Frankly, it looks a little dull. Performance could have made a tiny bit more effort with the colour, we feel. Or maybe a smiley face. ★★★

6. Gamester Dual Force Steering Wheel

- Platform: PlayStation
- Price: £69.99
- Available from: LMP on 01992 503133

This is the PlayStation version of the Gamester N64 wheel. Its handling feels, for some reason, rather clumsier than that of the N64 model, almost as though the faults of its cousin have been frustrating magnified. It takes practice – probably too much practice, we feel – to get to grips with the thing, while the Dual Force (another of those rumble vibrating gizmos) proves largely weedy and thus of marginal benefit or fun. ★★

7. Xplorer: The Ultimate Cheat Cartridge

- Platform: PlayStation
- Price: £29.99
- Available from: Blaze on 01302 325225

Plug-in cheating cartridges have been around for ages. Datel Electronics traditionally rules the roost with its series of Action Replay carts, which have, over the years, enabled you to cheat on everything from the Amiga to the PlayStation to the Vax 200 vacuum cleaner.

The Xplorer is a direct competitor to Datel's PlayStation Action Replay and works in the same way. A large list of game

cheats are included, while other pokes (special codes which modify the way a game works) can be copied from magazines and the Internet and then entered to enable you to cheat on other games. The Xplorer is compatible with codes available for all existing cheating interfaces – Action Replay, Game Shark and Equalizer – making it a bit of a "me too" product. Its USP is that it can apparently be used to link your PlayStation to a PC, which then lets you work out your own codes. We're not exactly sure how this works, but we are fairly certain that in this day and age few gamers have the levels of geekiness needed to put this to regular use. ★★★

8. Real Arcade Light Gun

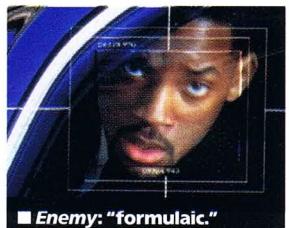
- Platform: PlayStation/Saturn
- Price: £34.99
- Available from: Joytech on 01525 852900

We're not experts in real-world weaponry, but we know our light guns and we like Joytech's chunky new effort – it reproduces that *Time Crisis* arcade machine feel perfectly. It's shaped just like the "Lawgiver" from the Stallone *Judge Dredd* movie (very sexy) and the slide kicks back each time you fire. There's even a foot pedal option and it's available in high-tech silver or a natty camouflage design. Great. ★★★★

Film of the Month



■ A field of screaming sinners, buried neck-deep. If that's the afterlife, we're not going.



■ *Enemy:* "formulaic."

Enemy of the State

■ Director: Tony Scott
■ Starring: Will Smith, Gene Hackman, Jon Voight
■ UK release: 26 December

■ Though ultimately merely a good, solid thriller rather than a great one, *Enemy of the State* (tagline: "It's not paranoia if they're really after you") is interesting in a number of ways. For a start, it sees director Tony Scott (best known for the glossy, all-action near-camp of *Top Gun*, of course) and lead comedian/rapper/actor Will Smith both playing it commendably straight for once. Better still, it messes with the idea that we're all living in what it calls "a surveillance state" in a number of interesting ways, not least by introducing as Smith's only ally a bristle-headed, bespectacled underground type played by Gene Hackman in a virtual reprise of a role he took nearly 25 years ago in Francis Coppola's classic high-tech paranoia thriller, *The Conversation*.

Smith is good in this, all po-faced as a Washington DC lawyer whose life is dismantled by evil government high-up Jon Voight when he lucks across proof that a congressman was murdered for opposing a bill that would make government snooping easier. As

HEAVEN AND HELL ROBIN WILLIAMS EXPLORES THE AFTERLIFE

What Dreams May Come

■ Director: Vincent Ward ■ Starring: Robin Williams, Cuba Gooding Jr, Annabella Sciorra, Max Von Sydow
■ UK release: 26 December

Robin Williams dies and goes to a spectacularly-realised heaven; when his wife later commits suicide, he descends, Orpheus-like, to the underworld to find her. The result is stunning, visually and emotionally.

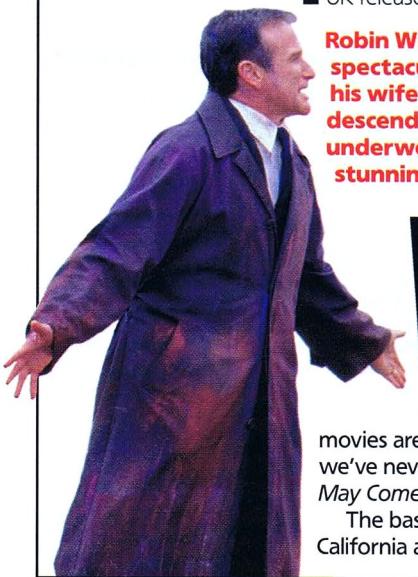
What *Dreams May Come* is not quite a perfect film – it's slow moving, some will think the ending kind of weak – but dammit, it delivers so much sheer ambition and imagination it demands to be seen. If the best movies are all about showing us things we've never seen before, *What Dreams May Come* delivers in spades.

The basic plot-line is simple: Northern California artsy couple Chris and Annie

meet, have kids, the children die in a tragic accident, Annie has a breakdown, Chris nurses her through it, then – just when it looks like they're rebuilding their lives – he dies too. And thus Robin Williams ends up in quite the most amazing, romantic version of heaven – it's all pre-Raphaelites and Renaissance artists – ever seen on film. With Cuba Gooding Jr as his guide he explores paradise, a magical place that seems to exist in a fluid state, changing as its occupants discover who it is they really want to be. The state-of-the-art effects make this worth the price of admission on its own.

But then further disaster. Back on earth, Annie has sunk into a state of despair and kills herself. Despair being the greatest sin against God, she is sent to hell, leading Chris into a probably hopeless mission to find her. And thus we enter another graphically astonishing world – a vision of hell that's all Bosch and Dali and sinners buried up to their necks. You think special effects can't surprise you any more, then, like buses, two come along at once.

What Dreams May Come has an incredible visual imagination and great performances from all its leads. But the greatest credit must go to New Zealand director Vincent Ward, whose brave, richly-detailed vision drives this modern semi-masterpiece. ★★★★



If Tomb Raider 3 was a film...

It's one that'll happen sooner or later, but here's how we'd do it. For a start, there's only one Lara, and that's Catherine Zeta Jones. She's dark, beautiful, fit but not over-athletic, genuinely British, and *The Mask of Zorro* shows she can turn her hand to action sequences.

The next most important thing: no love interest. Lara is warm and genuine but essentially mysterious and unknowable. Only at the end, her quest over, does she pick a man to entertain herself with. There's little in the way of supporting cast (Richard Wilson as her shambling butler), and for director? *GoldenEye* man Martin Campbell, who got the best of Catherine Z-J in the new *Zorro* flick.

■ Ah, Lara. Who is worthy?



Smith is discredited, fired and eventually fitted up for murder in an increasingly desperate campaign to get rid of him, Scott's love of the high-tech becomes a tad fetishistic (does he really hate the bugs, wiretaps, spy satellites and computer searches that punctuate much of the film?) and, as it does so, his movie abandons some of its more interesting themes in favour of the formulaic. Of course, there are few people who do formulaic quite as well as Scott, so you scarcely mind when set-pieces like two (count 'em) chases, a shoot-out and a neat double-cross all but take over.

Star spotters will enjoy this one, by the way: everyone from Gabriel Byrne to Lisa Bonet to Tom Sizemore crop up along the way. ★★

Meet Joe Black

- Director: Martin Brest
- Starring: Brad Pitt, Anthony Hopkins
- UK release: 15 January

■ A remake of the 1934 classic, *Death Takes a Holiday*, *Meet Joe Black* introduces Brad Pitt as a handsome nice-guy lawyer who chats up a millionaire's daughter. Don't get too attached to him, though, because he's soon dead and, for the rest of the overlong near-three-hour running time, his body plays host to the Grim Reaper, who's chosen to adopt Brad's corpse – not because he looks so buff, but in order to get close to the millionaire himself, so he can tell him that his end is near. It's a bizarre set up.

The film is torn between two dominating performances. Pitt as



■ *Joe Black*: "bizarre."



■ *The Seige*: "muddle-headed."

Death (nicknamed "Joe Black" by Parrish, the communications magnate he's come to kill) is often terrible; or, at the very best, painfully self-absorbed. Anthony Hopkins as Parrish, on the other hand, is sublime.

The sharp old millionaire manages to strike a deal whereby he can stay alive for as long as Joe Black remains amused by life on earth. For much of the film, then, Death simply follows Parrish around, prompting numerous intelligent, rather entertaining conversations in which Death talks in a stilted, technically-true-but-misleading fashion, and Hopkins simply shines. By the end of the film you want to slap Joe Black; Parrish you could handle for another hour.

Martin Brest (perhaps best known for *Scent of a Woman*) has fun with the idea of Death, who he depicts as an innocent having his first experiences inside a human body (it's reminiscent of *Starman* or *Splash* or a million others, right down to the aren't-orgasms-great? bits), and touches on a number of truths about love, death and other big issues. But Pitt's inadequate central performance often threatens to sink the whole ship, only to see Hopkins drag it effortlessly back to the surface. ★★★

The Seige

- Director: Edward Zwick
- Starring: Bruce Willis, Denzel Washington, Annette Bening
- UK release: 8 January

■ *The Seige* is one of those "torn from tomorrow's headlines" sort of movies, an uncomfortable cross between a vaguely jingoistic American political thriller in the Tom Clancy mould and something a bit more intelligent. It's an uncomfortable mix, and definitely the weakest of the three collaborations to date between star Washington and director Zwick (the other two being *Courage Under Fire* and *Glory*, which won Denzel an Oscar).

The Seige begins with Arab-American terrorists bombing New York and ends with an ludicrously bonkers psycho-general (played by a mumbling Bruce Willis with some sort of small dog on his head) declaring martial law, and thus coming into direct conflict with Washington and his FBI buddies. These include Bening, in an against-type, non-glam role as a workaholic intelligence agent, who comes across as quite the brightest person in the film.

The result is sadly somewhat muddle-headed. Are we meant to think the terrorist bombers are

the real bad guys here, or cold-blooded Bruce? Indeed, are we meant to treat the whole thing as a serious political thriller, or as a mere popcorn flick?

Ultimately, *The Seige* fails to do its big themes justice. But parts are memorable, chiefly some of the bombings, some of the lines ("What if they were black people? What if they were Italians?"), and Bening's scruffy, heavy-drinking, sexually-loose heroine, who walks away with the film. ★★

Rush Hour

- Director: Brett Ratner
- Starring: Jackie Chan, Chris Tucker, Tom Wilkinson
- UK release: 4 December

■ Hollywood likes Jackie Chan, but it's not convinced he can carry a whole American movie on his own. Hence, the new plan for Chan: team him with an American movie star, and hope the two strike sparks off each other.

It's not exactly an original idea, but when you've got two likable actors in the frame it works. And so it is that *Rush Hour* relies on the contrast between the modest, self-effacing, all-action Hong Kong supercop Chan and the motor-mouth, showboating LA 'tec' Tucker (he's better here, but you'll remember him as that annoying camp DJ who near-ruined the last half of *The Fifth Element*).

Cue a million scenes you could probably write yourself – Jackie leaping from a double-decker to a sign to a lorry, Tucker gabbling on while he thinks of what to do, Eddie Murphy style – but it's still fun. Albeit predictably. ★★★



■ *Rush Hour*: "likable."

Videos to Rent



■ *Sliding Doors*: "classy enough to avoid slush."

Sliding Doors

- CIC

■ A sentimental comedy for people who don't like sentimental comedies, *Sliding Doors* is classy enough to avoid slushiness, thanks to its post-*This Life* take on twentysomething mores. Gwyneth Paltrow plays the leading lady whose life diverges around a tube train caught or missed. One scenario shows her catching her boyfriend at it with his ex, while in the other he gets away with the misdeed and their relationship limps onward. The two stories run concurrently (although Gwyneth hardly gets her hair cut in one, preventing confusion), re-uniting in a clever and dramatic finale. You're just left hoping that in real life Gwyneth would never really go for a man whose chat up skills involve reciting *Monty Python* routines. ★★★★

The Big Lebowski

- Polygram

■ The Coen brothers make a straight comedy? Well, not quite. The plot may be easy to follow, but that's only because there isn't much of it. Jeff Bridges plays The Dude, an acid casualty who's laid back life is disrupted by a case of mistaken identity born of him happening to share a real name with a local millionaire who's trying to bump off his spendaholic playgirl wife. This framework is an excuse for increasingly surreal gags involving a pederast bowling champion and a triumvirate of German sado-masochist artists intent on removing The Dude's "Johnson". Coen brothers regulars John Goodman and Steve Buscemi excel as The Dude's inappropriately violent buddy and a fragile idiot non-savant. If you prioritise good sense over a good laugh, give this one a miss – otherwise, it's essential. ★★★★★

Godzilla

- Columbia TriStar

■ Rarely has a film generated so much hype ("Size does matter", remember?) and delivered so little. Roland Emmerich, director of *Independence Day*, once again attempts to make up for a preposterous plot with huge special effects, but *Godzilla* lacks all the style of his previous effort.

The story? French nuclear testing in the Pacific creates a gargantuan girl-lizard, who wrecks havoc on poor old Manhattan in an attempt to lay its eggs. Matthew Broderick and Maria Bello chase gamely after it, presumably in pursuit of their lost careers. *Godzilla* is a clichéd, boring and pathetic turkey. ★

Videos to Buy



■ *Alien Resurrection*: "European feel."



Excess Baggage

- Columbia TriStar

■ Alicia Silverstone plays a posh-girl-with-attitude who fakes her own kidnapping in order to win affection from her stuffy pa. When the plan goes belly up, Alicia winds up in the hands of a loveable car thief played by Benicio Del Toro and the pair begin an uneasy relationship. Throw in a subplot involving small-time mafiosi and a seriously typecast (but still classy) Christopher Walken as shady ex-CIA man "Uncle" Ray and all the elements of a

decent story are in place. Sadly, the whole thing is tarnished by some ropey acting. ★★★

Alien Resurrection

- 20th Century Fox

■ If you're a devotee of the *Alien* series, it's probably best to avoid this, since it should really be evaluated as a film in its own right. With Jean-Pierre Jeunet at the helm, lending *Resurrection* a definite European feel, the atmosphere is strong, the tension high and the aliens (particularly the "newborn") suitably hideous. In a clever plot contrivance, Ripley returns as a clone of her former self, parasite alien in tow. There are gaps in the story a mile wide, and you're propelled by intrigue instead of terror, but nevertheless it's a thoroughly modern sci-fi flick that retains its credibility. ★★★

Books & Music

Book of the Month



The Restraint of Beasts

■ Author: Magnus Mills
■ Publisher: Flamingo
■ Price: £9.99
■ ISBN: 0-00-225720-3



Re-released because it's been nominated for the Booker Prize, *The Restraint of Beasts* isn't the dry, intellectual exercise that you normally expect to find on the shortlist – chances are, you might even enjoy reading it.

Tam and Richie are taciturn Scots labourers with a passion for heavy metal, drinking and little else. After a bit, they go to England to build some fences. Plot-wise, that's about it – except that the deliberately anonymous prose of their foreman and our narrator soon reveal that something's up. Okay, so we never find out quite what that something is, but the sense of mystery generated by the deliberately simple writing and our protagonists' unquestioning nature is intense. A sinister, claustrophobic world begins to close in around Tam and Richie, but all they're interested in is making it to the Queen's Head before last orders. This excellent, blackly comic novel can be read in an evening, but it'll keep your brain occupied for weeks.

★★★ Sam Richards

Apocalypso

■ Author: Robert Rankin
■ Price: £16.99
■ Publisher: Doubleday
■ ISBN: 0-3854-0943-5

Life is difficult when you simply can't be politically correct. Look at Porrig: dumped by his feminist fiancée and beaten up by a *Big Issue* seller: if it weren't for the fact that he inherited a comic shop from his maverick uncle Apocalypso, he would be in ruins. But there's still time for Porrig's life to go downhill, owing to a combination of various awkward relatives (deceased, should-be deceased and living) and a giant sprout-like alien dredged out of the ocean.

If you enjoy Robert Rankin's novels and find penises hugely funny (and who doesn't?), you'll love this. It cracks on at a fair pace, and the various plots intertwine beautifully. Despite their oddities the characters seem real: no mean feat when they include one unable to be politically correct, an explorer with a false beard and a habitual masturbator. There's a good solid plot too – this is no one-joke novel – although it is somewhat reminiscent of Douglas Adams' *Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency*. Nonetheless, it's great fun and comes highly recommended.

★★★ Miriam McDonald

SOUNDS OF THE '70S

A LITTLE BIT OF POLITICS, A LITTLE BIT OF ROCK 'N' ROLL



Rolling Stone: The '70s

■ Authors: Various ■ Price: £20
■ Publisher: Simon & Schuster
■ ISBN: 0-684-85869-X

If your overall impression of American rock weekly *Rolling Stone* is that it makes a fine home for lengthy dissertations on yankee youth politics and suspect celebrations of such quality acts as Hootie & The Blowfish, but has little to say to you about your life, prepare to be amazed. *Rolling Stone* has one of the most fascinating histories of any magazine. Over the decades it's moved from hippy newsheet to glossy bible of MTV culture, delivering a raft of era-defining articles and spectacular covers along the way. This compilation does exactly what it says on the tin: it's the story of the *Stone* in the 1970s.

What we understand today as youth culture was a relatively new phenomenon back in 1970, and

Rolling Stone was a key text in documenting and defining its development. Music was always at the core of the magazine, but never its totality – looking at old issues of *Rolling Stone* you learn as much

about fashion, politics, even the fast-developing technology, as you do sounds.

Rolling Stone: The '70s has assembled a formidable band of commentators who relive their personal experiences of the decade in exuberant prose. Chrissie Hynde revisits the scene of the Kent State campus shootings, Nik Cohn investigates the making of *Saturday Night Fever* and Hunter S Thompson rambles on about drugs. These retrospective accounts are interspersed with *Rolling Stone* articles of the time, while a timeline running through the book offers an historical anchor. Needless to say, the look of the thing is immaculate, combining striking photos from the period with retro-stylised design.

Favourite bits? Well, there's a brilliant article by Michael Rogers detailing the personal computer revolution of the mid-'70s and its pioneers – an idealistic bunch of nerd-tinged college kids fiddling with electronics and BASIC programming as a counter-cultural hobby. Writing about Gates, Wozniak, Jobs and co., Rogers says, "they shared a nearly religious belief that the computer was a tool of personal liberation". These were heady days! And just one tiny corner of the patchwork quilt of the '70s to be found here.

Sam Richards



The Essential Bond

■ Author: Lee Pfeiffer & Dave Worrall
■ Price: £20
■ Publisher: Boxtree
■ ISBN: 0-7522-2477-8



There's hardly a world shortage of James Bond books, and *The Essential Bond* inevitably retreats a lot of old ground, but there's no denying the appeal of this "authorised guide to the world of 007". Concentrating on the official series of films (there are short chapters at the back on the books, the people behind the movies, the TV shows influenced by 007 and such rogue outings as *Casino Royale* and *Never Say Never Again*), this goes through them all in chronological order. It also details the production background, 007's assignment in the movie, the women he beds, the baddies he fights, the allies he uses, the vehicles he destroys and the gadgets he delights in. All very good, as far as it goes, but to my mind it's the use of evocative, often rare pictures that makes the thing. Thrown away on the back of the jacket, for instance, is a little seen Dr No shot of a white bikini-clad Ursula Andress lying in the surf that's simply sensational.

Matt Bielby

The First Horseman

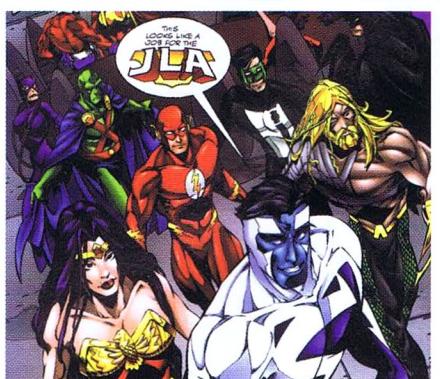
■ Price: Aus\$22.95
■ Author: John Case
■ Publisher: Century
■ ISBN: 0-7126-7703-8

Ah, thrillers. The end of the Cold War must have left many writers in a cold sweat. Luckily, it seems that the approaching Millennium has caused a boom in bizarre cults.

As any fool knows, the first horseman of the apocalypse is Pestilence, and so *The First Horseman* is set round a highly-organised cult's plan to release a killer influenza virus. What impressed me most about this effort is that so much of the storyline comes across as highly feasible. Case has certainly done his research – you'll learn a lot about flu and virus transmission here – and you'll believe that the events depicted could happen. The problem is that the characters are so thinly drawn. There's the beautiful-yet-single scientist and the journalist on a quest for the truth who no-one believes – they're both too formulaic to care about. Even the hero's family exist purely to give him some humanity. Not 100% satisfying, then, but it never gets dull and would make a great action movie.

★★★ Miriam McDonald

Comic of the Month



JLA

■ Writer: **Grant Morrison**
■ Artists: **Howard Porter** and **John Dell**
■ Publisher: **DC Comics**

If you're a bit of a grown-up, superheroes make for a very guilty pleasure indeed. There are other types of comic book you can vaguely justify to yourself – Frank Miller's *Sin City* crime stories, say – but muscle-bound flying guys with their underpants on the outside? That's kid's stuff, right? The problem is, like those pink shrimp sweets, like videogames even, once you've acquired the taste it never really goes away. And in Grant Morrison's revamped *Justice League of America* book – relaunched as simply "JLA" a couple of years back – we've finally got a comic that satisfies both our childish and adult cravings.

For the kid in you, it's got the lot: all DC's big guns,

including Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern, the Flash, and that big guy with the cape fighting increasingly potent menaces (and when they've defeated everything from alien super-races to living suns to invading angels in recent months, part of the fun is in seeing what Morrison will come up with to throw against them next). And for the adult, there's reliably clever – and often genuinely thrilling – scripting that makes full use of the abilities of its characters. When Superman leads a JLA completely stripped of its superhuman abilities against a planet-full of alien possessed zombies with a, "We have no powers, there are millions of them and there's a child in there who needs us to save the world. Let's go", I guarantee you'll be punching the air. Cheesy? Maybe a little, but it's good cheesy. This is one guilty pleasure no one – no matter how old – should give up.

★★★★★ **Matt Bielby**

JUSTICE FOR ALL

Music | Edited by Sam Richards



Black Crowes

By Your Side
■ Label: **Columbia**



Hoarser than Keith Richards' hard-rocking uncle, the Black Crowes seem like they've been around forever but are probably only about 30. They've danced with the devil and drunk his whiskey, been there, done it and had the transfusion, so when it comes to rocking in a Stones/Aerosmith/Faces manner, you know you can trust these guys.

By Your Side sees the Crowes rejecting recent technological forays and returning to their blues roots, although there's always a boogie to their beat. They're at their best on "Only A Fool" and "Heavy", when they whack on a huge gospel effect instead of the jobsworth guitar solo. Of course,

there are too many ladies lost at the bottom of a bottle for comfort, but Black Crowes have always thrived on a little bit of cliché. Oh, and did I mention they rock? Good. ★★★

Sam Richards

Black Star Liner

Bengali Bantam Youth Experience!

■ Label: **WEA**



Black Star Liner doesn't just dip a toe in the waters of musical eclecticism, it strips down to its pants and dive-bombs right in. Mainman Choque Hussein is a flamboyant, reggae-loving Asian from Leeds, and he stamps his healthily varied personality all over this album. Eclecticism on its own, however, doesn't make a great pop record, and while we can

admire Black Star Liner, it's hard to love the band.

There are moments of supreme inspiration. "Swimmer" is silky, swampy and a little bit spooky. "Superfly And Bindy" brims with righteous anger masquerading as cultural celebration; and "Khaatooon", though almost throwaway, hints at the orchestral peaks the group is capable of. Ultimately though, this is casserole, not a funky stew.

★★★ **Sam Richards**

Paul Van Dyk

Vorpsprung Dyk Technik

■ Label: **Deviant Records**

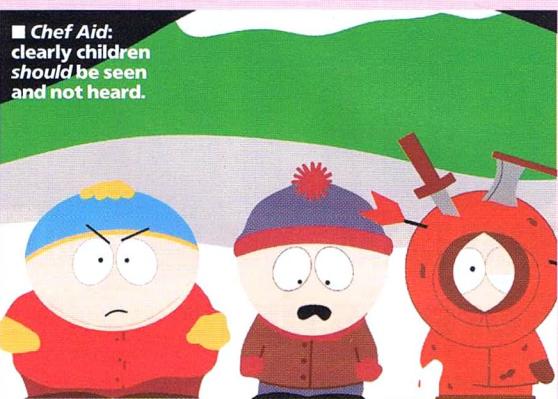


Recently nominated as International DJ of the Year by Muzik magazine, Germany's

Paul Van Dyk is having a good year. This three-CD compilation, highlighting his work since 1992, leaves you feeling that the last six years have been pretty good too. It's only now, however, with the chart success of "For an Angel", that people are taking serious notice. A good time, then, to cherry pick Van Dyk's output to this point and repackage it in an easily digestible form.

And that's exactly what Deviant has done. *Vorpsprung Dyk Technik* features both original trance compositions and remixes of tracks such as New Order's "Spooky" and Effective Force's "My Time is Yours." Don't expect the variety of a live set – this is all his own stuff – but if you know a little of his work and want more, it's all here. ★★★★ **Neil West**

Not Album of the Month



■ **Chef Aid:** clearly children should be seen and not heard.

HALF-BAKED

CHEF'S SAUCE MAY BE HOT, BUT IT'S NOT TOO TASTY

Various artists

Chef Aid: The South Park Album

■ Company: **Sony**

You can from Arcade's cover this issue, *South Park* is currently making a serious bid for the UK's over-worked attentions. The game of *South Park* (see pages 32 and 142) has tapped into the same vein of sick and absurd frivolity as the cartoon (I can't wait to try the cow-launcher myself), so it's a logical extension to the *South Park* brand. The album *Chef Aid*, however, follows in the grand tradition of comedy series offshoot records and is about as funny as a gas bill. Cartman doing his Rod Stewart impression is a laugh for ten seconds, but becomes some kind of rare and excruciating torture over four minutes. And that's assuming you only listen to your new CD once.

Meanwhile, the usual US alt-rock suspects (Perry Farrell, Primus, Ween) queue up to prove how wacky they are, and ancient dodgy geezers Ozzy Osbourne and Ike Turner merely celebrate the fact that *South Park*'s ultra-irony means they're allowed to be sexist assholes again. With crushing inevitability, we're also treated to exclusive tracks from Puff Daddy and Wyclef Jean, men who would rap over the theme tune from *Steptoe & Son* should the opportunity present itself.

Only the Chef himself provides any respite, largely because he's the best part of the programme anyway and he's voiced by the mercurial Isaac Hayes. On his three featured tracks, the lord of "spurting love juice" bursts his way through enough single entendre to make Fat Harry White blush. It seems that Chef is fine – it's those responsible for the rest of this half-baked album that require the aid. ★★

Sam Richards

Festive Jukebox

Here's what the pub will be playing until Twelfth Night. It's enough to turn anyone pagan.

Shakin' Stevens

Merry Christmas Everyone

■ Whatever happened to Shakey? Let's hope he's not alone with a bottle of brandy, contemplating his lost career this Yuletide.

Kirsty MacColl and The Pogues

A Fairytale of New York

■ On the list because the swearing and fighting, more than any snowy schmaltz, epitomises Christmas chez Arcade.

Wham

Last Christmas

■ A poignant Christmas heartbreak record, much empathised with by Arcade's Matt Bielby. He's also a fan of the cheese-heavy covers propagated by Whigfield and Billie.

The Fall

No Xmas for John Quays

■ Mark E Smith's attempt to reconcile the religious and commercial aspects of it all. At least, we think that's what he's on about.

Vince Guaraldi

The Charlie Brown Christmas Album

■ A mellow slice of jazz from the seasonal Peanuts TV shows. Neil says the beauty of this is that you can listen to it more than once without vomiting.

Baby Bird

Planecrash Xmas

■ The one where the Jones family go away for Christmas and return to find that a plane has crashed into their street, killing everyone. Beautiful.

Games & Gadgets

CUTTHROATS

WANT TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD? STEP RIGHT UP...

Serenissima

■ Publisher: Euro Games ■ Available from: Esdevium Games on 01252 326116
 ■ Release date: on sale now
 ■ Price: £35 ■ Players: 2-4

It might take some believing, but board games are coming back into fashion. Okay, so having a cupboard stuffed with the likes of *Monopoly* and *Cluedo* isn't about to gain you much kudos in the hippest circles, but with a solid stream of little known but highly enjoyable games coming in from the continent through specialist shops and importers, it's not just the board game cognoscente who are getting in on the act. Normal people are beginning to catch on, too.

These new games are for the most part fairly complex (particularly at first) and thus not for real beginners, but they offer diversity

■ Become master of the known world – and without getting your feet wet.



and a genuine chance to engage your friends on a cerebral level. Sure, multi-player *Quake* clones are all very well, but sometimes it's nice to sit back and think for a change.

Serenissima is a fine example of this sort of thing. It's a game for up to four people in which each player controls a capital city and, initially, a fleet of just one galley. Using these assets, your task is to expand your empire throughout the Mediterranean region, taking control of ports and trading in the materials – like gems, spices, iron and wood – that you'll find in each. Entering into combat is unavoidable, as the galleys compete to reach profitable destinations, and so it's essential that you maintain a healthy army. This army can protect your ships, but operates on a mercenary level; you'll have to pay your forces in ducats – the game's monetary currency.

Lasting about three hours, a game of *Serenissima* involves alliance-making, inevitable betrayal and a healthy dose of combat on the high seas. The game is won by whoever has built up the most valuable empire after a pre-determined number of turns. You score points for hanging on to your capital (and remember, this can easily be snatched from you if you maintain only a small standing army), for the number of ports you own and for the money and materials you have managed to accrue. Although the concept of *Serenissima* is initially difficult to grasp (again, it may seem a little daunting if all you've ever played is *Snakes and Ladders*) the mechanics of the game itself are fairly simple. Of course, becoming a master of the seas is far from easy, but then that's one sign of a good game.

★★★ Paul Pettengale

TALENTLESS? DON'T PANIC, IT DOESN'T MATTER

Yamaha DJX

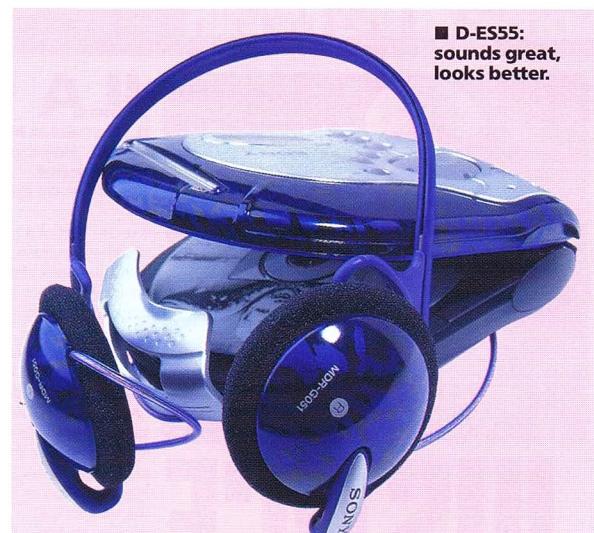
■ Available from: Yamaha on 01908 366700 ■ Price: £250
 ■ Release date: on sale now

■ It's an odd package, the DJX. It boasts that you don't actually have to be able to play the piano to use

it. Instead, you'll have great fun fiddling with the huge selection of knobs and preset tunes, and playing with the built-in samples. The supposed aim of the DJX is to enable you to swiftly and easily create dance tracks in your bedroom, using only a minimal

amount of talent. Now, whether or not you'll ever come up with anything good isn't certain, but it will definitely take you a long time to find out as the DJX features a limited sequencer and more options than a box of low-calorie chocolate drinks.

The Arcade team's plans to get to number one by sampling the riff from Guns 'n' Roses "Sweet Child of Mine" and rapping lazily over the top in a Puff Daddy/Mace style were slightly scuppered by the fact that you can't sample in more than



■ D-ES55:
sounds great,
looks better.

SILVER MACHINE MUSIC NEVER LOOKED BETTER

D-ES55 Discman

■ Available from: Sony on 0990 111999
 ■ Price: £160 ■ Release date: on sale now

From the mass of personal CD players on the market, we picked out this model on the basis of its unusual styling. It's a love it or hate it scenario: the purply-blue marbled casing will have you either coo-ing like a dove or reaching for the sick bucket. If you fall into the "sick bucket" camp you'll be pleased to learn that a plain black model is also available.

What's special about the D-ES55 is that it offers you not one but two sound processing options: Bass and Groove. Bass does exactly what you'd expect (obviously) – while Groove's kind of akin to the Loudness button on a domestic hi-fi, expanding the sound right across the spectrum. It's a good thing, too, for while such a feature is considered a no-no on a decent quality home hi-fi (it detracts from the quality of the original signal) it can be a real blessing when you're listening through headphones on a noisy Tube train. Just remember – for full trendsetter effect, big, full-ear, closed-back cans are the only way to go. ★★★★

Russell Deeks



six or
so seconds of any individual piece of music. So don't look for us on *Top of the Pops* just yet. But otherwise, the DJX comes highly recommended for the price.

★★★ Rich Pelley

■ Yamaha's DJX
has more buttons
and knobs than
the Space Shuttle.

HEY, MR DJ!

HOME MIXING MADE EASY

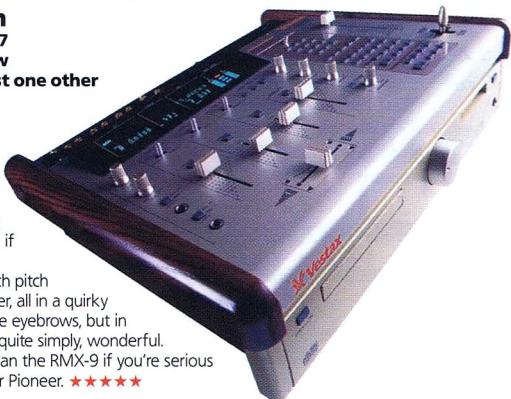
Fancy yourself as a DJ, but can't be bothered messing around with turntables and vinyl? No problem – getting into CD mixing still isn't cheap, but it's never been easier. At least, that's what T3 magazine's Russell Deeks says.

AA-88 Active Audio system

- Available from: **Vestax** on 01428 653117
- Price: £999 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
- What else you'll need: **speakers, at least one other sound source**

■ This Vestax AA-88 is an integrated set-up (it's got everything built in) although you'll need at least one other source (CD player or turntable) to get the most out of it. Unlike the RMX-9, the AA-88 has a full range of phono and line-level inputs, making it ideal if you're upgrading your current system.

What the AA-88 offers is a CD player with pitch control, MD recorder, tuner, mixer and amplifier, all in a quirky looking box. The styling's been known to raise eyebrows, but in terms of sound quality and functionality it is, quite simply, wonderful. The number of inputs gives it more appeal than the RMX-9 if you're serious about DJing; the less committed should go for Pioneer. ★★★★



DJC230

- Available from: **Apex** on 01707 266222 ■ Price: £300 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
- What else you'll need: **Nothing (except yer bumps feeling)**

■ Two CDs, mixer, amp and speakers all in one box, and all for under £300? Too good to be true, surely? Er, yes, actually.

The DJC230 is supposedly aimed at would-be DJs who fancy a dabble without spending an absolute fortune. All well and good, but it's got no pitch control on the CD decks, making anything other than Disco Dave Doubledecks-style sequencing of intros and fade-outs impossible. You can't beat mix with it, full stop – making it a bit like a car for would-be drivers that you can't actually steer. What's more, it feels cheap and plasticky, and while it does sound reasonably clear, it's pitifully quiet. Of interest to the landlords of God-awful fun pubs (and perhaps would-be Radio 1 DJs) only. ★



DJM-300S, CDJ100S, EFX-500

- Available from: **Pioneer** on 01753 789789
- Prices: £299, £349, £399
- Release date: **on sale now**
- What else you'll need: **amp, speakers**

■ This little lot bridge the gap between the complete novice market catered for by the RMX-9 and the professional end of the spectrum (where Pioneer's CDJ100S is rapidly becoming the industry standard installation CD deck). The CDJ100S is basically a budget version of the CDJ500S, aimed at the bedroom DJ who's got a mixing set-up already but wants to add CD to the equation; the DJM-300S is a complementary mixer, with two channels, each switchable between both line-level and phono inputs; and the EFX-500 is another FX unit, this time offering up to 25 different digital effects to play around with.

Sound-wise it's better than the RMX-9, but you should think carefully before splashing out: if you're not convinced DJing's going to be a lasting hobby, you're talking about adding a lot of money to what's already going to be a big bill. ★★★★



KMX100, KCD 860

- Available from: **Kam** on 01727 840527
- Price: £99, £399 ■ Release date: **on sale now**
- What else you'll need: **amplifier, speakers**

■ Again, one to consider if you're taking DJing a little more seriously, the KCD860 is a split unit with two CD decks in one section and all the controls (including pitch sliders) in the other. This is the budget end of the pro/installation market, so while you hardly get two decks in one unit, you don't get jog dials, for instance. But you do get pitch bend and a loop facility, and really, what do you expect for £399?

The KMX100, meanwhile, is just one of many Kam mixers: we've picked this particular two-channel model largely for its striking looks, and also because it offers "kill" facilities (read: EQ on steroids), which most mixers at this price don't. The system's sound quality is perfectly fine for the price, although it loses a couple of stars because, let's face it, the KCD 860's pretty clunky-looking. ★★★



A OUR CHOICE

RMX-9 microsystem

- Available from: **Pioneer** on 01753 789789
- Price: £999 or £1,199 (MC or MD version)
- What else you'll need: **speakers**

■ This micro system is truly out on its own: it's the only fully integrated product with pitch control on the market. This means you get two DJ-friendly CD decks, an amp/tuner, an FX unit and a cassette deck or MiniDisc recorder (depending on whether you want to pay £999 or £1,199), plus a mixer/control unit. The real star of the show is the FX unit, which offers six sound processing effects (Delay, Echo, Auto Pan, Flange, Pitch Shift and Old Record) plus a built-in sampler – so you can not only mash up the beats like a pro, but also create your very own custom versions of tracks as you go along. In other words: hours of fun. The sound's reasonable for the money, and if you're starting from scratch (if you'll pardon the pun), this is the one to go for. ★★★★★





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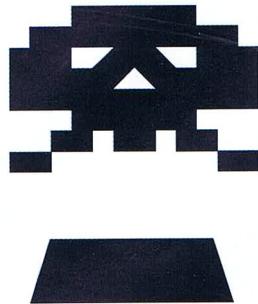
ahead of the game

At last, an email worth reading.
Get along to **www.futuregamer.com**
and see what you're missing.

BRITAIN'S
300

FAVOURITE GAMES!

Edited by
Mark Green



A-list

Congratulations, you've made it as far as Arcade's A-List – the biggest guide to the games on sale in the UK today. Thinking about browsing in your local store? You need our tips on what's hot and what's not – revised every month.

PlayStation

2Xtreme

■ Sports ■ 1-2 players
■ SCEC Half-arsed extreme sports cobblers Utter nonsense. You get snowboards, skateboards, 'blades, MTBs, 12 courses, ten characters, four levels, two players – but it's scuppered by cock-eyed graphics and sloppy controls. ★
Or try: **ESPN Extreme Games**
■ 1 player ■ SCEC ■ More snow, more wheels, more garbage. ★
Also available: **Snow Racer**
■ 1-2 players ■ Ocean ■ Crude and too simple. ★★



Actua Golf 3

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Gremlin Interactive Time for tee Tee up with eight courses, a variety of one-player and multi-player tournaments, and some lovingly crafted scenery. It doesn't offer anything new over other golf games, but the slickness of it all, and Peter Allis' commentary, brings it in well under par. ★★★★
Or try: **Actua Golf 2** ■ 1-4 players ■ Gremlin Interactive ■ Well-made, if unsurprising, golf sim. ★★★★

Actua Ice Hockey

■ Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ Gremlin Interactive Minority sport for psychopaths Surprisingly slow and unresponsive, but Actua Ice Hockey's saving grace is its easy-to-pick-up control system. It has players bouncing off the ice in no time. ★★★★
Or try: **Wayne Gretzky's Hockey**

■ 1-2 players ■ GI Interactive ■ 3D graphics, but strictly 1D long-term appeal. ★★★



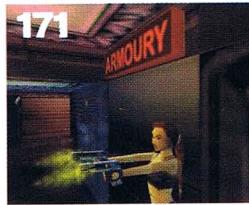
165 Puzzler heaven!

"Oh god, my head's killing me." Five brain-twisting puzzlers you'll never forget



166 Why I hate Mario

It's a love-hate thing. Rich Pelley explains why Palma's pipe-mech made his life hell.



168 Final Fantasy VII

Does the best fantasy ever stand up to a long term test?

170 Full of Holes

Games to avoid at all costs – this month Aero Gauge.

163 PlayStation games

Over 130 games reviewed for Britain's top console.

167 PC games

More than 90 of the latest PC releases rated.

171 Nintendo 64 games

We haven't forgotten...

172 Game Boy games

...the less popular systems!

Star ratings

★★★★★ Simply the best. A game you really should try.
 ★★★★★ Excellent. Definitely worth your money.
 ★★★ Good stuff. Not exactly a world beater, but fine within its genre.
 ★★★ Strictly average. We say: don't buy it.
 ★★ Really bad news. Avoid at all costs.

Air Combat
■ Flight sim ■ 1 player
■ Namco ■ Platinum
Decisively not up where it belongs Namco is much better at racers than flight sims, so while this *Top Gun*-influenced, mission-based arcade-style flyer is fun for a while, you'll find that average graphics and ultimately tedious gameplay eventually take their toll. ★★★

Alien Trilogy
■ First-person shooter
■ 1-4 players ■ Acclaim Entertainment ■ Platinum

Doom-style antics with Ripley and "friends" General monotony and aliens that look like they might fall apart at any minute (but are actually far too difficult to kill) make this a lot less scary than the movies. ★★

Or try: BRAHMA Force: The Assault On Beltlogger 9
■ 1 player ■ Jaleco ■ Some great graphics but uninteresting corridor-based levels. ★★



Alundra

■ RPG ■ 1 player
■ Psygnosis Old-style RPG
An absorbing plot and an enticing arcade feel which harks back to the days of *Zelda*. With gorgeous graphics and addictive gameplay, the emphasis is as much about moving and jumping as on solving the difficult but logical puzzles.

★★★
Or try: Azure Dreams
■ 1 player ■ Konami ■ Conquer the ever-changing tower. ★★★

Arcade's Greatest Hits: The Atari Collection 2

■ Retro ■ 1-4 players
■ Midway Nothing to do with us, fortunately Millipede, Road Blasters, Crystal Castles, Marble Madness, Paperboy and Gauntlet, in increasing order of importance. Unfortunately, none of them – not even the eminent *Gauntlet* – holds up well in an age when you need massive breasts to become a gaming legend. ★★★

Assault

■ Shooter ■ 1-2 players
■ Telstar Old-school blasting action Take a chunk of *Contra* on the SNES as a basis, add 3D and a plentiful supply of power-ups and some intuitive controls, and this particular slice of arcade action is worth its name. Some slowdown, and a fluctuating difficulty level ruin it, though. ★★

B-Movie

■ Shooter ■ 1 player ■ GT Interactive '50s-style shoot-the-alien game An amusing shoot-'em-up with a mission-based slant and cartoony graphics. The ability to improve your ship over time is great, but the controls and levels conspire to make life far too much of a hassle. ★★★

Batman & Robin

■ Adventure ■ 1 player ■ Acclaim Entertainment As good as the film (yes, that bad) A mixture of various gaming styles that don't really gel, despite the puzzle theme. Poor controls and general repetitiveness hammer the nails home – at least it does the movie justice. ★
Or try: Batman Forever
■ 1 player ■ Acclaim ■ Poor quality scrolling fighting game. ★



Battle Arena

Toshinden 3
■ Fighting ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE The crazy old men

return A high for the *Toshinden* series, though still eclipsed by the shadow of *Tekken*. Improvements over the original are obvious, but it's limited in every respect when compared to the Big T. ★★★

Or try: Battle Arena
Toshinden 2 ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE ■ More of the same. ★★★

Bio Freaks

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ GT Interactive Unhinged human-robot hybrid tussling Out-and-about polygon fighting fun, including massive-weapons-per-fighter and limbs-flying-left-right-and-centre counts. With longer fights and more moves it could have made four stars, but as it stands, it's fast – but limited – fun. ★★★

Blasto

■ Adventure ■ 1 player ■ SCEE Broad-shouldered babe-rescuing action hero Slow and limited – with plodding graphics and horrid controls. The puzzles are tricky for all the wrong reasons – like trying to find the end of a roll of sticky tape with chewed fingernails. ★★

Bloody Roar

■ Fighting ■ 1-2 players ■ Hudson 3D beat-'em-up with added animal magic Limited moves, but what there is is very quick and smooth. Set apart by both its style and the ability of its fighters to change into various animal forms – nothing new if you remember TV's *Manimal*. ★★★
Or try: Cardinal Syn ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE ■ Beat-'em-up that dispenses with fair play. ★★

Bomberman World

■ Puzzler ■ 1-5 players ■ Sony/Hudsonsoft Bomber bloke's debut on PSX When Hudsonsoft suggested that it was going to turn the 2D *Bomberman* mazes isometric, the whole world screamed. The conversion's here, and in one-player mode offers endless tedious mazes that only differ in speed and boss size, with nothing new offered over the first *Bomberman*. Inevitably, however, the multi-player game is ridiculously addictive. ★★★

Breath of Fire III

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment Turn-based isometric role-player A genuinely interesting story-line (all about combining genes to give dragons special powers) and a host of characters you'll care about, combine to make this genuinely involving, while the rotatable isometric perspective is neat. The pace gets a bit ploddy at times, though. ★★★

Brian Lara Cricket

Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Codemasters Leather-on-willow simulator This cricket sim is so realistic that you know it's your fault when you're losing. It's painfully hard half the time (literally – batting is much easier than bowling), but this is surprisingly playable and very well-crafted, with the commentary and graphics in particular standing out. ★★★★



Bushido Blade

■ Fighting ■ 1-2 players ■ Sony Pugilism for purists Using trad weapons, and with characters who drop to the floor after just one hit, this is the beat-'em-up for purists. After other,

more cartoonish, scrappers it takes time to adjust to fighting this way (and even longer to become truly proficient) but there are rewards aplenty if you persevere. ★★★★

Bust-A-Move 2

■ Puzzler ■ 1-2 players ■ Acclaim Entertainment You'll forget sleep exists! The simplest and most addictive game since some Russian bloke had an idea while mucking about with his kids' Lego. Just match the blobs to clear the screen – two-player mode will keep you and a mate up all night; try one-player and you risk losing every friend you ever had. ★★★★
Or try: Bust-A-Move 3 ■ 1-2 players ■ Acclaim Entertainment ■ Insomnia continues. ★★★★

Cheesemaster 3D

■ Puzzler ■ 1 player ■ Mindscape If you want PSX chess, it's your only option More expensive than a real chess board, but cheaper than Big Blue, this isn't the best-presented game in the world. Still, it's laden with skill levels and options. ★★★

Circuit Breakers

■ Racing ■ 1-4 players ■ Mindscape *Mario Kart + Micro Machines* = not quite as good as either The varied courses and a decent helping of speed add up to a fine comedy racer. The multi-player game will have you waking the neighbours with boisterous swearing, such is the range of weapons and tactics involved. ★★★★

Colin McRae Rally

■ Racing ■ 1-2 players ■ Codemasters Only his Mum's ever heard of him A departure from the usual racing game, with time and damage your only opponents. The variety of terrain and responsive controls give a real feeling of driving feedback – it's gratifying to see a racer that can compete with *GT*. ★★★★

Crash Bandicoot 2

■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ SCEE Pseudo-3D antics, again Far better looking than the original, and with slightly more to do, but the level formats haven't been changed significantly and it's quick to finish. ★★★

Colin McRae Rally

■ Racing ■ 1-2 players ■ Activision ■ Solid 3D platformer. ★★★

Crime Killer

■ Racing/shooter ■ 1-2 players ■ Interplay *Fuzz of the future* A mission-based shooter. Hunt "Burning Epoch" terrorists, using the armed bikes, cars and wings at your disposal. It's fast, with good graphics, but constantly ranges in difficulty. And when it's difficult it's very difficult. The two-player option seems a bit tagged on, too. ★★★
Or try: Pitfall 3D
■ 1 player ■ Activision ■ Short-term driving mayhem. ★★

Colony Wars: Vengeance

Space shooter ■ 1 player ■ Psygnosis Epic space battles, in space Looking absolutely gorgeous, this epic sequel takes your spaceship through a variety of missions and all-out explosive battles. It's off-puttingly methodical, but it provides enough realistic space combat to make *Star Wars* fans wet their pants. ★★★★

Or try: Blast Radius

■ 1-2 players ■ Psygnosis ■ Space mission flying antics. ★★★



Command & Conquer

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment ■ Platinum The original real-time war simulator Manage all your resources and send men to their deaths. It's extremely popular, solid and involving, but it's starting to date, and the design of the levels and speed of the action make it a bit of a bargain. ★★★★
Or try: Z
■ 1 player ■ SCEE ■ Robotic action strategy. ★★★

Command & Conquer: Red Alert

■ Strategy ■ 1-2 players ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment And again... The strategy sequel with improved graphics and a great link-up game. If you don't come to the massacre

with a mouse, then knock a star off the score, but otherwise this is a very fine game with a massive number of missions. ★★★★

Or try: Command & Conquer: Retaliation

■ Strategy ■ 1-2 players ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment ■ An update of *Red Alert*. ★★★★

Cool Boarders 3

Racing ■ 1-2 player ■ SCEE Snowboarding fan all over again With a hefty collection of tracks, characters and boards, and looking a good deal better than previous episodes, PlayStation snow-fans should get their shivery little hands on this one. Smooth

controls make careering down the trick and speed courses a breeze, and it's only let down by the iffy collision detection. ★★★★
Or try: Cool Boarders 2 ■ 1-2 players ■ Acclaim Entertainment ■ Snowboarding for the masses. ★★★★

Crash Bandicoot

■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ SCEE ■ Platinum 3D antics with a mad marsupial The supposed challenger to *Mario* emerges as a repetitive, 3D, on-rails platformer. Beautiful graphics, and a good size, but even at £20 the gameplay is too shallow. ★★★★
Or try: Jersey Devil
■ 1 player ■ Ocean ■ Tough challenge, great cartoon graphics. ★★★

Crash Bandicoot 2

■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ SCEE Pseudo-3D antics, again Far better looking than the original, and with slightly more to do, but the level formats haven't been changed significantly and it's quick to finish. ★★★★

Die Hard Trilogy

■ Shooter/racing ■ 1 player ■ Electronic Arts Goblins and sorcerers in old-skool role-playing Far too simple, with little to do except wander around medieval environments, engaging in both unimaginative fighting and chatting. The controls and graphics haven't had an easy transition to the PlayStation, but the innovative co-operative two-player game and random map generator pull it from the brink. ★★★

Crime Killer

■ Racing/shooter ■ 1-2 players ■ Interplay *Fuzz of the future* A mission-based shooter. Hunt "Burning Epoch" terrorists, using the armed bikes, cars and wings at your disposal. It's fast, with good graphics, but constantly ranges in difficulty. And when it's difficult it's very difficult. The two-player option seems a bit tagged on, too. ★★★★
Or try: Felony 11-79
■ 1 player ■ ASCII ■ Short-term driving mayhem. ★★

Die Hard Trilogy

■ Shooter/racing ■ 1 player ■ Electronic Arts ■ Platinum Three games in one Excellent value for money, this bundle includes a *Tomb Raider*-style shooter, a *Time Crisis*-alike and a driving game. Obvious effort has been expended on each part, both in the graphics and gameplay, and the three are difficult enough to last you for ages. ★★★★★

Croc

■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ Fox Interactive

3D crocodile adventure Lovely-looking cuties platformer, ruined by some odd camera angles, poorly-designed levels and a complete lack of originality. Less of a true 3D environment than developer Argonaut would have you believe, too. ★★
Or try: Bubsy 3D
■ 1 player ■ Accolade ■ Derivative cash-in. ★

Doom

■ First-person shooter ■ 1-2 players ■ GT Interactive ■ Superb In the beginning... Superb conversion of id's breakthrough first-person shooter. The minor fact that the graphics are already years out of date merely enables the excellent level design and the simplistic gameplay to shine. Every home should have one... ★★★★★

Dead Ball Zone

■ Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ GT Interactive ■ Rugby for space-age sadists An attempt to update the sadly ageing classic *Speedball* for today's violence-eager audience. There's plenty of blood and vomit, but the stupidly fast play, a ball that's too difficult to see and the clueless, drunken computer players mean it never flows properly. ★★★★

Dead or Alive

■ Fighting ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE Slick beat-'em-up

Barren-looking but with quick-as-you-like visuals, this makes for a slick deviation from *Tekken*-style fighting through its clever use of counter-attacks, and an emphasis on chucking people up in the air. Sadly, though, *Dead or Alive* is only really distinguished from the horde

Dead Ball Zone

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Or try: Star Wars: Dark Forces

■ 1 player ■ Virgin ■ Interactive Entertainment ■ Shoot-'em-up with Stormtroopers. ★★★

Duke Nukem

■ First-person shooter ■ 1-2 players ■ GT Interactive

"You want some?" An outrageously bad-taste first-person shooter, starring a crazed psychopath, numerous topless lovelies and several toilets. Strong gameplay, and with levels that are

by its tragic "bouncing breasts" option. ★★★★



Destruction Derby

■ Racing ■ 1-2 players ■ Psygnosis ■ Platinum

Early PlayStation racing Buy this, and you'll be staring into space wondering why for several hours each day. The small, poorly designed tracks mean there's very little fun to be had. Head straight to the sequel. ★★

Destruction Derby 2

■ Racing ■ 1 player ■ Psygnosis ■ Platinum

Smashing sequel Making good almost all of the faults of the original, this sequel is incredibly fast, includes varied well-designed tracks, and offers more crashes than your average PC. And it's a mere 20 quid, too. ★★★★

Diablo

■ RPG ■ 1-2 players ■ Electronic Arts

Goblins and sorcerers in old-skool role-playing Far too simple, with little to do except wander around medieval environments, engaging in both unimaginative fighting and chatting. The controls and graphics haven't had an easy transition to the PlayStation, but the innovative co-operative two-player game and random map generator pull it from the brink. ★★★

ingeniously designed around real-life locales, but it's all looking a bit dated already. ★★★★

Or try: One

■ 1 player ■ ASC Games ■ Slick graphics, big guns. ★★★★

Everybody's Golf

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ SCEE

Cartoon-style stick-and-ball antics Simplistic looks but complex gameplay, with an arcade slant that injects more speed and a host of secrets to earn. Buy *Actua Golf* if you want realistic simulation, but this one's great if you don't take your golf too seriously. ★★★★

Or try: Konami Open Golf

■ 1-2 players ■ Konami ■ One-course arcade stuff. ★★★★

Also available: PGA Tour '98

■ 1-4 players ■ EA Sports ■ Platinum ■ Two courses, crap trousers. ★★

Fade to Black

■ Adventure ■ 1 player ■ Electronic Arts ■ Platinum

Sequel to the classic *Flashback* Looking its age, with dull flat-shaded graphics, but still a very commendable mix of puzzles, running and shooting. It has since been done a great deal better, but this is fun for the price. ★★★★

Final Fantasy VII

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ SCEE

150 hours of truly epic adventure Quite incredible cutscenes, which mix seamlessly with the moving characters, exciting conflicts and a story-line that will have you emotionally involved throughout. The random battles and linear nature are minor faults, but otherwise, it's a near-perfect adventure experience. ★★★★★

Formula 1 '98

Racing ■ 1-4 players ■ Psygnosis

Purportedly accurate driving sim In an astonishing climb-down from the previous two incarnations, this is saddled with a ton of pop-up, inadequate views that prevent you from seeing far enough ahead and horrendous handling. The wealth of options and feeling of realism save it a little, but not enough. ★★★★
Or try: Formula 1 '97
■ 1-2 players ■ Psygnosis ■ Vrooom... ★★★★

Forsaken

■ First-person shooter ■ 1-2 players ■ Acclaim

Entertainment Blast bikers away Battle to the death in a mad scramble to gain the last resources of a condemned planet in this very tough tunnel-based hovercraft shoot-'em-up. The controls are tricky, but the sheer look of the thing will keep you persevering. ★★★★
Or try: Tunnel B1
■ 1 player ■ Ocean ■ Fast and claustrophobic. ★★★★

Frenzy!

■ Shooter ■ 1 player ■ SCI

Pilot a biplane, fly into the screen, fall asleep The levels are huge, but confusing, mostly ill-conceived and full of weirdness. With only three lives, your death comes frustratingly often, and the shoddy graphics and slowdown are immensely frustrating. And, on a quest for nails to slam into its coffin, it tries hard to be funny. ★

G Darius

■ Shooter ■ 1-2 players ■ THQ

Updated 2D shooter

15 levels arranged so that you have a choice of route don't make this game any easier, or any less monotonous. It's action-packed for shooting fans, and the great "attack enemy ship to use their weapons" concept is nifty, but with so many enemies on screen you risk brain bleed. ★★★



G-Police

■ Shooter ■ 1 player
■ **Psynosis You are the law**
Mission-based shoot-'em-up, with plenty of variety and a series of interesting world layouts set in domed cities. Initially as easy to control as a three-year-old in a supermarket, but stick with it and a compulsive experience emerges, especially as it manages to slip some strategy elements in while you're not looking. ★★★★

Gex 3D: Enter the Gecko

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ **Take 2 Interactive Lizard-lover's platformer** It's after Mario's crown, but Gex doesn't feel as free-roaming as the Big M. You do have 125 moves at your disposal, and the level design is almost as good as Nintendo's. It's a barrel of fun, but thanks to its appalling sense of humour, not a barrel of laughs. ★★★★

Ghost in the Shell

■ Shooter ■ 1 player ■ SCEC
Take on the world in a little tank This manga-licensed offering has first-person gunplay, coupled with straightforward search and chase missions. These are varied, but get to the end of each one and you're faced with a boss who's simply too hard to beat. The control and structure favours stealth and tactics, giving short-

lived – if frustrating – fun. ★★★
■ **Or try: Assault Rigs** ■ 1 player
■ Psynosis ■ Doom with tanks.
★★

Grand Theft Auto

■ Joy riding ■ 1 player
■ **BMG Interactive**
Controversy ahoy! The shoddy graphics and poor speed affect the central appeal of kicking in civilians and driving whatever vehicle you care to purloin, but this is still an involving crim-'em-up. Just don't look at the graphics on the PC version, unless you want to be made green with envy. ★★★

Gran Turismo

■ Racing ■ 1-2 players
■ **SCEE Probably the best racing game in the world**

Take one measure of outrageously good graphics and near-perfect handling, throw in immediacy of play and almost limitless levels of depth, add a dash of replay mode, and you've a pleasure pie that can't be missed. A masterpiece. ★★★★

Heart of Darkness

■ Platformer ■ 1 player
■ **Ocean Long-awaited 2D adventure, and it shows**

Four years out of date, this Gallic epic about a boy and his wee doggie is frustratingly difficult, despite hints thrown up at various points, and descends into trial-and-error on too many occasions. It's saved by its size, though. ★★★

■ **Or try: Hercules**

■ 1 player ■ Electronic Arts
■ SNES-style cartoon platformer.
★★★



■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
■ Konami **The best football**

game in the world Konami sticks one up its desperate licence-toting rivals by beautifully honing its original killer title. Playability is smoother, tactics more subtle, graphics more well realised, goal-scoring more rewarding and that through-pass will send shivers of ecstasy along your spine. Plus Tony Gubba's commentary is oddly soothing. ★★★★

■ **Or try: Kick Off '97**

■ 1-2 players ■ Maxis ■ There's no prize for second place. ★★

Jeremy McGrath Supercross '98

■ Racing ■ 1 player
■ **Acclaim Entertainment**

Eat soil less often than you would in real life Very fast, but far too easy, so this dirt bike sim jettisons any sense of reality. The graphics are poor, but the track editor adds an minor element of longevity if you're the creative type who likes motocross. ★★

Kick Off World

■ Sports management

■ 1-2 players ■ Anco

Direction and playing combined The management section suffers from a distinct lack of options but just about passes muster, while the playing section looks terrible, has flawed keepers and chucks out goals every couple of minutes. The lack of depth and excitement make Kick Off roughly comparable to watching week-old re-runs of ITV footy coverage. ★

Kula World

■ Puzzler ■ 1-2 players

■ **SCEE Indecently addictive puzzler** Ball-rolling-impossibly-on-a-floating-maze game. Hard to get into, but once you're sucked in you'll be hooked, mostly because



of the well-designed controls and head-scratching levels. You won't stop playing these colourful scenes until you've literally scratched your own head off. ★★★★

■ **Or try: Kurushi**

■ 1-2 players ■ SCEC

■ Mind-twisting block-shifting.
★★★

Lemmings Compilation

■ Puzzle ■ 1 player

■ **Psynosis Save multiple midgets from hideous death**

The latest instalment of this long-running series steps back to the roots of the crazy little 2D suicidal maniacs. Click on little men to help them avoid traps and get safely home, scream at the screen in frustration and find it impossible to stop playing. Still, it's all looking very dated. ★★★

Loaded

■ Shooter ■ 1 player

■ **Gremlin Interactive**

■ **Platinum Mass murder**

quest Starring a whole series of unhinged nutters, this bloke-bloodbath has no pretensions about being anything other than mindless shooting, complete with gore-splattering explosions and weapons that would make Arnie blush. It's very difficult to see what's going on, and the sheer number of similar mazes will have you very bored, very quickly. ★★

Megaman Legends

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ Virgin

■ **Interactive RPG – Japanese style**

The long-awaited 3D update of Megaman's '80s platform/shooting adventures. The addition of an RPG element has provided some depth, but the repetitive nature of the game – destroying big robot after big robot – could put you off. ★★★

Micro Machines V3

■ Racing ■ 1-8 players

■ Codemasters ■ Platinum

Tiny cars race around your living room The old 2D game souped up into pseudo-3D for a modern audience, and it's a

beauty. There are 30 innovative courses, based on kitchen tables and school desks, coupled with a multi-player game that's just beautifully designed and great overhead camera. And all of this for just 20 quid? We must be dreaming. ★★★★★

■ **Or try: Motor Mash**

■ 1-4 players ■ Ocean

■ Old idea with a new twist. ★

Mortal Kombat 4

■ Fighting ■ 1-2 players

■ **GT Interactive "Come and 'ave a go if you think..."**

Although in 3D, this fails to take advantage of the extra dimension, thus boiling down to the same old tedious MK fights again and again. The controls and characters look incredibly over-familiar, it's not a patch on Tekken 3. Strictly for fans of the series. ★★★

■ **Or try: Mortal Kombat Trilogy** ■ 1-2 players

■ GT Interactive ■ Everything from the previous three. ★★★

Motorhead

■ Racing ■ 1-2 players

■ **Gremlin Interactive**

Furious racing action A futuristic racer, which at 50fps is so fast and smooth you'll be on the edge of your seat throughout. The courses aren't fantastic, but with ten cars each race, the sheer ferocious glee of screaming past the opposition makes for a pant-dampening experience. ★★★★

Mr Domino

■ Puzzler ■ 1 player ■ JVC

■ **Does exactly what it says on the tin** A PSX version of those Record Breakers-style domino-topping events, with a central character cursed with the inability to stop walking. Work out what's going on, and this gets addictive, but it suffers from that typically Japanese too-easy feel. ★★★

Music: Music Creation for the PlayStation

■ Music creation ■ 1 player ■

■ Codemasters **Custom-build your very own techno**

Create your own toons and a psychedelic

polygon video to go with them, using a system of manipulating little chunks of music and video. This fulfils its purpose – enabling anyone to create pumping dance – but it's too difficult for novices and too insulting for more professional deck-spinners. ★★★

■ **Or try: Fluid**

■ Music ■ 1 player ■ SCEC ■

Interactive aquatic music. ★★★



N2O

■ Shooter ■ 1-2 players

■ **Gremlin Interactive Old-style shooter** Traditional shoot-'em-up, set in futuristic tunnels, and more on-rails than Gremlin would have you believe. It feels similar to Tempest, and is good fun in a retro sense, but despite its addictive powers, it's just not that exciting. ★★★



Namco Museum 1

■ Retro ■ 1 player ■ Namco

Galaga, Pac-Man, Pole Position, Rally X

The first of the five-strong museum collection is certainly the best, housing the least obscure games of the various volumes. It might provide nostalgic relief, but this lot are a bit too simple for today's audience. ★★★

NBA Live '98

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players

■ EA Sports **3D basketball**

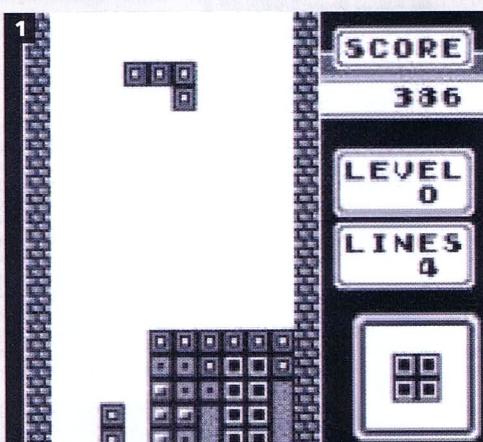
An improvement over the two earlier incarnations, these 3D players have



FIVE OF THE BEST

My head hurts!

Fancy straining your brain? Here's our guide to the best mind-meddlers money can buy...



1. Tetris

■ Game Boy ■ Nintendo

Accuse us of playing it safe all you like, but this block-based bamboozler is still the most absorbing way of testing your grey matter to its limit. Knobbly blocks fall down the screen, and threaten to spill over the top unless you fit them together, jigsaw-fashion. Designer Alexey Pajitnov (who was

sadly, recently shot dead) used his mathematical prowess to craft *Tetris* around the limits of the human brain. So if you know anyone who either doesn't like, or can't cope with, *Tetris*, you can legitimately claim that their brain must be sub-standard.

2. Bust-A-Move

■ PlayStation/N64 ■ Acclaim

In one-player mode, *Bust-A-Move* is a maddeningly addictive battle to match like-coloured bubbles and prevent the rotund lovelies from swamping the screen completely. In two-player mode, where successfully removed bubbles magically transport over to your competitor's ever-filling screen, time is distorted and important meetings ignored. The presence of over 200 screens, and the appearance of veteran videogame stars Bub and Bob, are the delicious cherries on top.

3. Super Puzzle Fighter 2

■ PlayStation ■ Capcom

When asked to develop a puzzle game, Capcom didn't make any special effort – it simply threw *Tetris* and *Bust-A-Move* into a bubbling cauldron, said the magic words, and then watched as this

infuriating, but addictive, brain-buster emerged. Arranging coloured gems into lines is made all the more enjoyable by the use of *Street Fighter*-style characters and combos, and a host of crazy Japanese trimmings.

4. Kula World

■ PlayStation ■ SCEC

A refreshingly original puzzler, this great Swedish entry secures douze points in the Eurovision of videogames. Guide a rolling, bouncing ball towards keys, avoid various obstacles, and sense your brain slowly falling to bits. It all feels strangely Dali-esque, as you negotiate wooden mazes suspended impossibly in the sky, and a sphere rolling over it all in a gravity-defying way. Mad.

5. Wetrix

■ N64/PC ■ Ocean

Wetrix asks you to build lakes and fill them up, before evaporating the water for big points, and despite its odd setting and brain-boiling intensity, begins to betray its similarity to *Tetris* after a few minutes play. It looks stunning, with splashing water, fire bombs, ducks, and even a lovely rainbow. The only real problem is that it'll almost certainly make you want to go to the toilet all the time.

enough options to satisfy anyone who sits up at night watching hoopoe on Channel 4. Even with all the stats, though, it's dull. ★★
Or try: NBA Hangtime
 ■ 1-4 players ■ GT Interactive
 ■ Competent but uninspired. ★★

Need for Speed 3
 ■ Racing ■ 1-2 players ■ EA Sports
I feel the need... Plenty of modes to make the game last longer, great graphics and a good sense of speed (lucky, what with the name and everything). The chance to leg it from the police and the two-player mode make this the best NFS so far, but it has been overtaken on the inside by Gran Turismo. ★★★★
Or try: Test Drive 4
 ■ 1-2 players ■ EA Sports
 ■ Smooth graphics, neat tracks, intuitive controls. ★★★★

NFL Blitz
 Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ GT Interactive
US footy simplified and made fun Departing from the usual American football style (overloading on rules and stopping for a rest every other minute), and moving to something more worthwhile (emphasis on speed, simple controls, usage of fists), this is top fun. It's slightly repetitive and looks glitchy, but that's easy to forgive. ★★★★

NFL Extreme
 Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ SCEE
US footy simplified and made dull Tries to make Yank football "easy" and "fun", but, unlike GT's NFL Blitz, fails miserably. The graphics are a mess, making creating plays near-impossible, and your team seems quite happy to

carry on playing without your help. And someone should tell Sony that insane screaming footballers are very unfunny indeed. ★★

NHL '99
 Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ Electronic Arts
Ice hockey for mother pucks Intelligent team-mates and all the stats you'll need aren't enough to save this disappointing take on the sadist's favourite sport. The puck tends to find itself in the net for most of the game, at the expense of any proper hockey action. ★★
Or try: NHL Powerplay '98
 ■ 1-2 players ■ Virgin ■ Sturdy but slow. ★★

Ninja: Shadow of Darkness
 ■ Action adventure ■ 1 player ■ EIDOS
Interactive *Here comes the man in black...* A great range of punches, kicks and magic, coupled with a decent amount of switch-finding and the like, make this enjoyable enough. But, sadly, the odd camera system spoils the lovely graphics, and overall, the game is horribly difficult. ★★★
Or try: Pandemonium
 ■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ BMG Interactive
 ■ Platinum ■ Two sorcerers' apprentices jump about. ★★★

Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus
 Puzzle ■ 1-2 players ■ GT Interactive
Puzzly platform game with agile alien Wander through screens of 2D platforms and rescue your Mudokon friends, solving puzzles along the way. Often infuriating rather than tricky, but with a host of neat touches and graphics that are quite good enough to frame and hang on your wall, this is a long-lasting and enjoyable challenge. ★★★★

Or try: Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee
 ■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ GT Interactive ■ Platinum ■ Save cute-but-ugly alien from the meat factory. ★★★★

ODT
 Platformer ■ 1 player ■ Psychosis
Disappointing third-person adventure thing The first real Tomb Raider clone, with a sizeable slice of RPG chucked in and one-move-and-you're-dead tricks and traps. The sprawling levels promise much, but the controls are dreadful and the whole experience is too difficult to extract any fun from. ★★

Pandemonium 2
 ■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ BMG Interactive
It's chaos in there Crystal Dynamics didn't take criticism of the original on board, and the augmented breasts of female lead Nikki are the only change here. Pandemonium 2 still suffers from basic platform sins (like the leap of faith), and the lack of challenge and appalling camera will make you cry. ★★
Or try: Pandemonium
 ■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ BMG Interactive ■ Platinum ■ Two sorcerers' apprentices jump about. ★★★

PaRappa the Rapper
 ■ Rapping ■ 1 player ■ SCEE
Puppy love songs It's time to join the rapping dog with

"attitude". A selection of fantastic tunes make this brilliantly funny and completely original. Hit the buttons so you rap "Good" and you're sure to finish PaRappa in an afternoon, but this said, it's still something you should have a lot of fun with. ★★★★

Point Blank
 ■ Light-gun shooter ■ 1-4 players ■ Namco
Grab your gun Only the Japanese could create a shooting gallery featuring ninjas and piranhas, stick in a four-player mode, and still make it one of the most weirdly addictive gameplay experiences this side of Time Crisis. ★★★★
Or try: Crypt Killer
 ■ 1 player ■ Konami ■ Poor-man's light-gun fight. ★

Pool Shark
 Sports ■ 1-2 player ■ Gremlin
A game "baized" on the popular sport Almost identical to other snooker games, the graphics are okay, but it inexplicably replaces the friendly customizable power bar with some golf-style click-at-the-right-moment nonsense. And is playing snooker on your own actually that much fun? The answer is no, fact fans. ★★★

Porsche Challenge
 ■ Racing ■ 1-2 players ■ Sony ■ Platinum
Cruise in expensive cars Stunning light-sourcing and lovely sunsets make this one of the best looking racers, and 24 tracks, including variations on each of the basic circuits, will ensure longevity. Realistic handling (so we're told) and the easier-to-control arcade mode should keep wannabe owners happy for days. ★★★★

Or try: Formula 1 ■ Racing

■ 1-2 players ■ Psychosis ■ Good

looking, but an ultimately dull

experience. ★★★

Poy Poy
 ■ Platformer ■ 1-4 players ■ Konami
Chuck stuff about Chucking blocks, rocks and even your opponents at each other is the aim – a console Jerry Springer Show, if you will. Despite the arenas, ranging from forest to desert, the one-player game lacks variety and runs slowly. The multi-player option – on the other hand – provides pure, if freaky looking, worthwhile entertainment. ★★★★

Premier Manager '98
 ■ Sports management ■ 1-4 players ■ Gremlin
Interactive Football management for everyone It's the most comprehensive simulation this side of Rudd's office, and yet it's also clearly presented and easy to understand. Would-be Hoddles (if there be any) will enjoy months of re-creating England's various spectacular World Cup crash-outs. ★★★★

Rage Racer
 ■ Racing ■ 1 player ■ Namco
Arcade racing in your house The third in the Ridge Racer series is speedy, moodily good looking and laden with options. This is the definitive racer if you like your racing a bit more "Woah-woah-woooaaahhh!" than Gran Turismo. Let down only by the lack of a split-screen option. ★★★★★

Or try: Peak Performance
 ■ 1 player ■ Electronic Arts ■ Great editing, poor driving. ★

Rampage World Tour
 ■ Smash-em-up ■ 1 player ■ GT Interactive
Old-school bizarro building-smasher An attempt to bring a very old arcade game up to date for a '90s audience. It was original and fun at the time, but now it falls at the first hurdle by being too simplistic, too easy and looking very poor

indeed. Check out the three massive monsters, though. ★

Rapid Racer
 ■ Racing ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE
Powerboat racing The random "track" generator is a good inclusion, and the hi-res visuals will undoubtedly make jaws drop, but the handling and lack of realism causes it to sink and gracefully to the bottom of the gaming ocean. ★★

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Or try: Jet Rider 2
 ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEE ■ Haphazard water fun. ★★



Rayman
 ■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ Ubisoft ■ Platinum
Old-school platformer, now looking a bit wrinkly Cheap, but that's about all it has in its favour. It's very 16-bit, and doesn't have anything that would push a dear old Mega Drive. It's packed with eye-wrenching colour and it's horrendously difficult; just say "No!", kids. ★★

Resident Evil
 ■ Action adventure ■ 1 player ■ Capcom
Bang-bang, boom-boom driving game The "hilarious" taxi driver-based plot bears no relevance to the game, and the variety of ways in which you can attack other cars are strangely unsatisfying. It's pretty, and the ability to shoot anything that moves (or doesn't move) is welcome, but spending half an hour destroying cars on each level is never liable to grip you in the right places. ★★

R-Type
 Shooter ■ 1 player ■ Virgin
Combo of classic scrolling shooters Classic shooters R-Type parts un et deux presented for your delectation; emulated rather than converted and therefore closer than close to the originals. The lovely level designs, the perfect power-ups and the sheer addictiveness of it all, squeezed into your little portable TV. Sweet. ★★★★



Resident Evil: Director's Cut
 ■ Action adventure ■ 1 player ■ Capcom
Added value version of RE2, plus a demo of the sequel Now that we have RE2, the significance of the demo here is diminishing, but if you still don't have the original, this is a nigh-on essential purchase. This is the Japanese version, so is bound to attract the hardcore gamer. ★★★★

Ridge Racer Revolution
 ■ Racer ■ 1-2 players ■ Namco ■ Platinum

Fast car action The definitive arcade racer. Looks absolutely beautiful, but it's the fantastic arcade-style handling and ridiculous speed that should have you racing over the three one-player tracks for quite unreasonable amounts of your life.

The five-course two-player link-up mode finishes off an utterly brilliant package. ★★★★★

Or try: Ridge Racer
 ■ 1 player ■ Namco ■ Platinum ■ Brilliant, but smoothly overtaken by Revolution. ★★★★

Rival Schools
 Fighter ■ 1-2 players ■ Virgin Interactive
Teachers and students take to the ring Absolutely mad Grange Hill-style fighter, featuring ral high schools, with over-the-top moves and a huge selection of modes and sub-games. It's not technically great, but it's a whole heap of fun, and its relative simplicity and easily pulled-off moves make it a good option if you usually steer clear of smack-'em-ups. ★★★★

Road Rash 3D
 ■ Racing ■ 1-6 players ■ Electronic Arts
Manx TT meets WWF With four nasty gangs to get involved in, this is the racer for people who like the look of bruises on a man. The racing is supplemented by smacking other riders about, but unfortunately the two don't balance well in practice. It's got speed, though, plenty of cool bikes to choose from, and it's certainly a bit of a looker. ★★★★

Rogue Trip
 Shooter ■ 1-2 player ■ GT Interactive
Bang-bang, boom-boom driving game The "hilarious" taxi driver-based plot bears no relevance to the game, and the variety of ways in which you can attack other cars are strangely unsatisfying. It's pretty, and the ability to shoot anything that moves (or doesn't move) is welcome, but spending half an hour destroying cars on each level is never liable to grip you in the right places. ★★

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S.C.A.R.S.
 ■ Racing ■ 1-4 players ■ Ubisoft
Cute racer A faithful attempt at a Mario Kart clone, but rather less immediate. It has a rather difficult control system that rewards patience, and greater deviations in style and handling between the individual vehicles, but the multi-player game option – Mario's strong point – is not as enjoyable. ★★★

Sentinel Returns
 ■ Strategy ■ 1-2 players ■ Psynopsis
Classic '80s tactics Your aim is to absorb the Sentinel, who sits on the highest point on the landscape, and the attempt has lost little in translation from 8-bit to PSX, especially as the graphics have all been kept deliberately low key to maintain the feel of the '80s original. Eerie, massive and – praise the Lord – a successful retro game. ★★★★



Soul Blade
 ■ Fighting ■ 1-2 players ■ Namco ■ Platinum
Take on Tekken Similar to the Tekken

THE GAME THAT RUINED MY LIFE

It drove me round the bend

Everyone's played Super Mario Kart on the N64, but what of the original SNES version? Don't ask Rich Pelley.

■ 9.00am on Monday morning, Physics, paper 2. 2.00pm the same Monday afternoon, History, paper 1. Up at 7.00am, back at 11.00am. Really need to brush up on the Treaty of Versailles... Oh, okay, just couple of quick Star Cup laps, 150cc, natch. But it's so much better with two players: "Want to come over for a quick game of Mario Kart?"

And this activity was considered to be a good day's GCSE revision. Maybe, I'd convinced myself, I'd sit down to English and Question One would read "Oh, stuff Hamlet. Where are you going to find the short-cut in the Mushroom Cup Ghost House?" "Easy," I would reply: "just use the feather on the penultimate bend." I'd get an A. I'd get 12 A's, as long as I could race around the Rainbow



Road at full pelt without ever falling off.

SNES Mario Kart was utterly fantastic, the tracks awesome, the handling of the karts phenomenal, the powerups a stroke of pure genius. There was so much to learn, to love, to cherish.

It would have remained timeless if it wasn't for the appearance of Super Mario Kart on the N64 which, to avoid getting addicted to all over again, I promised myself I'd never play. Still, though, I wonder if it's any good?

series, with huge weapons, and rather good. The graphics are top, and the 3D moves will have your eyes popping out of your skull. As you're stabbed in the back with a humongous sword. ★★★★

Spawn: The Eternal

Action ■ 1 player ■ SCEC
Movie-based nonsense

Looking very similar to Lara Croft's infamous adventures, but lacking the excellent level design, depth of gameplay or graphics, Spawn tries to marry fighting and dungeon exploration, but there're no prizes for failing so miserably. ★

Spice World

Music/dancing ■ 1 player

■ SCEC ■ Platinum **The fab five... er, four**

Looking a little rushed, this is the chance you've waited for. Choreograph cartoon Spices to their own music. There are so few moves and rewards for success, that it's (inevitably) one for the fans, and liable to grate. Rather like the Girls themselves. ★

Spyro the Dragon

Platformer ■ 1 player ■ SCEC

Platforming with a camp dinosaur Starring a purple My Little Pony/dinosaur hybrid, this gorgeous 3D platformer is partly aimed at the kids, as the initially simplistic and dull early levels demonstrate. But the dragon-rescuing missions and platforming theme are well-crafted, and the worlds are huuge. ★★★★

Street Fighter EX Plus Alpha

Fighting ■ 1-2 players

■ Capcom **Another in the beat-'em-up series**

Conversion of the first 3D SF coin-op, with loads of extra bits. Excellent speed and good backgrounds, as well as pleasingly familiar moves and style, make it just as intuitive as its great predecessors. ★★★★

Or try: Marvel Super Heroes

■ 1-2 players ■ Capcom ■ 2D

super hero combat. ★★★★

Also available: Street Fighter Collection ■ 1-2 players ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment ■ Missed opportunity for a history lesson. ★★★

Super Puzzle Fighter 2

Puzzler ■ 1-2 players

■ Virgin Interactive

Entertainment Superb

Tetris-style puzzling Mix Tetris and Bust-A-Move, add some Street Fighter kiddie characters, and you have one of the best puzzlers of all time. It's insanely addictive in two-player mode, but try one-player and you'll have the family banging on your door, wondering where you've been for the past month. ★★★★

Tekken

Fighting ■ 1-2 players

■ Namco **Round one... fight!**

Usurped by its progeny, but the first Tekken combines slick visuals with a series of moves that would have your mother fainting to the floor. Plenty to do in one-player mode, and only surpassed in two-player by its sequel. ★★★★

Or try: Star Wars: Teras Kasi

■ 1-2 players ■ Virgin Interactive

Entertainment ■ Enjoyable, Star Wars-enhanced beat-'em-up.

★★★

Tekken 2

Fighting ■ 1-2 players

■ Namco **Round two... fight!**

Again, it used to be the best beat-'em-up... until Tekken 3 arrived. The character models wouldn't look out of place in a pre-rendered demo, the one-player game is totally engrossing (uncommon for a fighter) and there are plenty of moves, bosses and secrets to get your teeth into. ★★★★

Or try: Dark Stalkers

■ 1-2 players ■ Virgin Interactive
Entertainment ■ Over-the-top beat-'em-up. ★★★



Tekken 3

Fighting ■ 1-2 players

■ Namco **Round Thr... oh, never mind**

Here they are again. Similar to Tekken 2, but a major improvement in almost every way – graphically flawless and new moves give something for both newcomers and veterans. There's so much to do, that it's almost the Mario of fighting games. But no cute stuff. ★★★★

Or try: Dynasty Warriors

■ 1 player ■ Ocean ■ Gorgeous looking, but still no match for the Tekken series. ★★

Tenchu

Fighter ■ 1 player

■ Activision **Lara Croft and the oriental arts combine**

Starring a bloke who gets about with the aid of a grappling hook, this hugely atmospheric kung-fu fighting/exploring game looks suspiciously similar to the Tomb Raider games. If the camera hadn't made things difficult, and the graphics had been less glitchy, this could have been a five. ★★★★

Tennis Arena

Sports ■ 1-2 players

■ Ubisoft **Comedy tennis antics**

Has much to offer, in a long tradition of cutesy tennis "simulators", but unfortunately none of these offerings are really anything new. It also jettisons many of the more complicated tactics for simplicity's sake, leaving it with little depth. ★★

Test Drive 4x4

Racing ■ 1 player

■ Electronic Arts **Racing for the tedious**

Six courses, five classes of car and a whole variety of environments to race about in should be adequate, but 4x4 looks terrible, and there's an inexplicable lack of speed. The incessant over-excited commentary, coupled with flying up into the air at every bump, will ultimately get on your nerves. ★★

Or try: Test Drive 5 ■ 2-players ■ Electronic Arts Driving again, then. ★★

Theme Hospital

Strategy ■ 1 player

■ Electronic Arts **Medical resource management**

More of a geriatric hospital these days, and the lack of PSX mouse control can make it a sod to play. It's okay, but this build-your-own-hospital-and-cure-diabolical-comedy-style-illnesses strategy is looking a little bit Bloated Head in today's age of Command & Conquer and Warhammer. ★★



Time Crisis

Light-gun shooter

■ 1 player ■ Namco **Go for your gun**

The innovative "duck and reload" option is present, as is the G-Con 45 light gun. Both make for exciting, bloody and flowing play that relies on pure speed. With bonus levels as a reward for performance, don't worry about

the longevity – just feel the power. ★★★★

Or try: Judge Dredd

■ 1 player ■ Gremlin Interactive ■ Enjoyable 3D blaster. ★★

Or try: Maximum Force

■ 1 player ■ GT Interactive ■ Tired, repetitive, frustrating. ★★

TOCA 2

Racing ■ 1-2 players

■ Codemasters **Yet more touring car mayhem**

Sweet driving action with a garage-full of cars that all handle differently and embrace accurate driving physics (whatever that is). If it wasn't for its intense difficulty, this'd be the perfect racer, with very accurate courses and speed, and a real smoothness that'll genuinely frighten you. Rev on! ★★★★

Or try: TOCA Touring Car

■ 1 player ■ Codemasters ■ One of the first proper racing sims. ★★★★

Tomb Raider

Platformer ■ 1 player

■ EIDOS Interactive **Indiana Jones meets Melinda Messenger**

It made Lara Croft a global icon and shod several positive images of computer games into the mass media, but it was the excellent level design and atmosphere that sold the game. Tomb Raider wiped off some of Mario's smile, and showed that a pretty face and great gameplay aren't mutually exclusive. ★★★★

Or try: Deathtrap Dungeon

■ 1 player ■ EIDOS Interactive ■ Poor graphics and a worrying camera. ★★

Also available: Rosco McQueen

■ 1 player ■ SCEC ■ Garish, but fun and simple. ★★



Tomb Raider II

Platformer ■ 1 player

■ EIDOS Interactive **"Stop staring at my butt!"**

Here she is, then, back for her second adventure, with 18 levels, a few new moves and vehicles to drive, increased speed and rather better controls. The level designs, which in some ways surpass the original, make this one (another) classic. ★★★★

Or try: Nightmare Creatures

■ 1 player ■ SCEC ■ Simplistic exploration. ★★

Tomb Raider II

Platformer ■ 1 player

■ EIDOS Interactive **"Stop staring at my butt!"**

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Or try: Twisted Metal 2 ■ 2-players ■ SCEC ■ Futuristic first-person shooter. ★★★

variety of both weapons and exploratory missions – from crashed jumbo jets to Aztec cities. The underwater aspect is a bit of a gimmick, though. ★★★★

Total NBA '98

Sports ■ 1-8 players

■ Sony **Get in the hoop** A sim which requires a degree of real determination to both learn and succeed, thanks to intelligent computer-controlled opponents.

A great create-a-player mode, a whole range of options and total control over your players mean that, once it's flowing, Total NBA '98 is as addictive and beautiful to watch as the real thing (a subjective opinion, obviously). ★★★★

Track & Field

Sports ■ 1-4 players

■ Konami ■ Platinum

Bash buttons till you're red raw An update to that age-old game skill, "Bash the buttons like crazy to run as fast as you can". The polygonal competitors look lovely, and they all move quite convincingly, although the 11 events are rather similar to each other. For the most fun, get some mates round for a competition. Just be ready with the Band Aid for your battered fingers. ★★★★

True Pinball

Pinball ■ 1 player ■ Ocean

■ Platinum **Flipping mad**

One of the best pinball sims, but that doesn't make it an essential purchase, unless you're too scared to go down the arcade. Across the four tables, the choice of 2D and 3D views doesn't help when the visuals are so poor, but the physics of the ball work well, and there're the obligatory multi-ball and video displays. ★★★

Vigilante 8

Racing ■ 1-2 players

■ Activision **Destructive '70s-influenced driving shoot-'em-up**

Blowing up buildings and cars using "crazee" '70s vehicles sounds great, but with just more destruction per extra level and no real "woomph" behind the explosions, monotony is hot on your heels. ★★★★

Or try: Twisted Metal 2 ■ 2-players ■ SCEC ■ Futuristic first-person shooter. ★★★

Viper

Shooter ■ 1 player

■ Ocean **Mission-based shoot-'em-up**

Supposedly free-flying, but with barriers that will smack you up should you deviate, repetition that sees you hitting easy target after easy target, and a very strange camera angle. Too dark, and far too easy. ★★

Wargames

Strategy ■ 1-2 players

■ Electronic Arts **Action oriented strategy game**

The missions are simple and limited in number, but this is a very worthy action-based alternative to C&C. The wide range of vehicles you can control, and the capture-the-flag two-player game, will keep you laughing as you watch men die. ★★★★



Tommi Makinen Rally

Racing ■ 1-2 players

■ Europress **Rallying game**

Suffers when compared to Colin McRae, in terms of level of realism and speed. There are 130 tracks and you can create more of your own, but with a far better game out there, there seems little point in buying this. ★★★

Treasures of the Deep

Adventure ■ 1 player

■ SCEE **Underwater exploration**

The lack of levels is compensated for by a sharply rising difficulty curve and a wide

earning cash for more weaponry, the regular feeling of not quite understanding what's going on, and the need to repeat certain missions many times over, makes this one for the fans only. ★★★

Wild Arms

RPG ■ 1 player ■ SCEC

Huge role-play adventure

Strong RPG, but eclipsed by the shadow of SquareSoft's seminal classic Final Fantasy VII. Suffers from Final Fantasy's random battle syndrome, and the slick, but retro-looking visuals strip away much of the feeling of involvement, but it's still very absorbing. ★★★★

Wild 9

Platformer ■ 1 player

■ Interplay **Oddly named top blaster**

Looks and feels a little like Pandemonium, but it's distinguished by its deeply scary mechanical arm that helps you get about and smash things up. Deep down, it's a 2D platformer, and the difficulty level is all over the place, but the innovations – such as using killed enemies to help you progress – make for an involving and exciting experience. ★★★★

WipEout

Racing ■ 1-2 players

■ Psygnosis ■ Platinum

The game that made the PlayStation the console of choice It boasts the soundtrack that helped make gaming "cool", but unforgiving controls and nasty opposing craft mean you'll need perseverance. Your reward sees you careering down classic neon tracks at incredible speeds and throwing up your lunch. ★★★★

WipEout 2097

Racing ■ 1-2 players

■ Psygnosis **A sequel 100 years in the making**

A better bet than the original for the casual racer, as the learning curve is more gentle, but the new, more difficult class Psygnosis has added should make the veterans weep. Comes with excellent CPU opposition, more weapons and the twistiest tracks this side of Alton Towers. ★★★★

World Cup '98

Sports ■ Multi-player

■ EA Sports **Sophisticated stadium football**

The classic football package, and the only one where soundly whipping Argentina gives you any real good factor. Des and Motte are on the mic, and you get seemingly infinite options and stats, but most crucially, the gameplay's also more intelligent than its predecessors. Great controls and camera angles mean immediate satisfaction, but with questionable longevity. ★★★★

Or try: Three Lions

■ Sports ■ 1-2 players

■ Take 2 Interactive ■ Much hyped, sadly flawed. ★★

Worms

Puzzler ■ 1-4 players

■ Ocean ■ Platinum **Sadistic invertebrates strap on weapons and cause death**

Tries too hard to be cute and different, and subsequently has a very gimmicky feel. The shareware origins are all-too easy to discern, and the AI will make you spit blood, so Worms is best played with a friend. On the plus side, you can customise the game to your heart's content. ★★★

WWF Warzone

Wrestling ■ 1-4 players

■ Acclaim Entertainment **Leardy leotard lovelies fight it out**

With moves and characters that make play interesting, and a great create-a-player section that enables you to custom-build your own fighter. Unfortunately, it's a bit slow and sluggish, and there's little variety from fight to fight, but the regular feeling of not quite understanding what's going on, and the need to repeat certain missions many times over, makes this one for the fans only. ★★★

variety from fight to fight, but the regular feeling of not quite understanding what's going on, and the need to repeat certain missions many times over, makes this one for the fans only. ★★★★

Or try: WCW Nitro

■ Fighting ■ 1-2 players

■ Crazy men in swimming costumes. ★★

Xenocore

Shooter ■ 1-2 players

■ Grolier Interactive **Mission-based space shooter** Strategy and tactics in the Xenocore turn out to be little bearing on the actual game you end up playing, and the mission briefings lead you to expect more than there is. There's plenty of shooting, but it's dull stuff, with dismal graphics, difficult controls and weapons that are genetic clones of one another. ★

X-Men Vs Street Fighter

Fighter ■ 1-2 players

■ Virgin Interactive **Entertainment Fight!** Merges the X-Men into the Street Fighter universe, and maintains the control system and sprite-based characters that you've come to expect from the series, while adding fighters of a size to rival the Empire State Building. A bit repetitive, jerky and shallow to please true fighting fans. ★★★

Zero Divide 2

Fighter ■ 1-2 players ■ SCEC

Mad robot-beating game

There's hardly any moves. There's no feeling of contact. There aren't enough flashing lights or big bangs. There's no sensation of adrenaline coursing at speed through your throbbing veins. And it looks terrible. Best leave it on the shelf, then. ★

PC

Actua Ice Hockey

Sports ■ 1-3 players

■ Gremlin Interactive **Freezing fast-paced action**

Likely to be overshadowed by NHL '99, but still the beauty of the ice hockey world, despite some glitchy graphics, especially since you get to play as any one of the world's top teams. The controls are tricky, but it all takes place at a decent pace, and the very harsh computer opponent and tactics will satisfy true bloodsport... er, sorry, ice hockey fans. ★★★

Actua Soccer 2

Sports ■ 1-4 players

■ Gremlin Interactive **Actually football**

Convincing graphics and a shedload of camera angles, but the latter seem kind of pointless when you will almost certainly be sticking with one. The play is frustrating, there's a very limited number of options and, quite shockingly, it's worse than its PlayStation incarnation. ★★★

Or try: Jack Charlton's Soccer Nation

■ Sports management ■ 1 player

■ Attica ■ The worst football game ever. *

Actua Tennis

Sports ■ 1-4 players

■ Gremlin Interactive <b

uninspired. Any complicated tactics tend to leave the screen a mess of tiny menus, waypoint markers and patrol paths. ★★

Bass Masters Classic Tournament Edition

■ Fishing sim ■ 1 player
■ THQ ■ Budget **Go fishing, but on your PC** No, really – it's fishing on your PC, which isn't quite as bizarre or boring as it might sound. ★★

BioSys

■ Strategy/adventure
■ 1 player ■ Take 2
Interactive Survive alone in a dome Stay alive by keeping your gigantic biodome ticking over. BioSys chucks a load of puzzles and resource management at you, but doesn't become frustrating. The plot will suck you in, but you might find it a bit slow. ★★

Buggy

■ Driving ■ 1-2 players
■ Gremlin Interactive
Radio-controlled racing

Lunacy The 16 teeny-weeny cars are heaven to handle, bouncing and skidding all over the shop, and have enough differences to make them last fun. But the tracks – indoors and out – while lovely to look at, are a bit confusing, and there's not the fun or hidden depth of Mario and friends. ★★★

Bust-A-Move 2

■ Puzzler ■ 1-2 players
■ Acclaim Entertainment
Match bubbles, go mad One of the most addictive puzzlers since Tetris, bringing its bubble-colliding strategies to your screen

in an explosion of rainbow-hued visuals. It's a simple idea, and provides much more of a challenge than you'd initially think, with the particularly addictive two-player mode highlighting the brilliance of the concept. ★★★★

Caesar III

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ Sierra
Roman-based strategy

antics There's two ways of playing this – either as a straight Sim City rip-off, or as a mission-based Roman Emperor-em-up. It's incredibly complicated, and the amount of stuff to do may bring on a "Caesar", but stick at it and you'll find it involving and addictive. ★★★



Castrol Honda Superbikes World Championship

■ Racing ■ 1 player
■ Interactive Entertainment

Motorbikes A playable game, but the over-sensitive controls make it far too hard. ★★

Championship Manager 2

■ Sports management

■ 1-8 players ■ EIDOS

Interactive Be Kev Keegan With CM3 imminent, this prequel has appeared at a bargain price. Looking a little out-of-date now, and still far, far too easy, it's nevertheless engrossing and packed with neat details. ★★★★

DethKarz

■ Racing ■ 1-8 players ■ Infogrames ■ More space-age racing

A futuristic racer akin to WipOut and the like. The four worlds and 12 circuits are brilliantly designed in a rollercoaster vein, and there's tons of weaponry to get your sweaty mitts on. But the continual skidding off the road and steep learning curve will put you off eventually. ★★★

Descent to Undermountain

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ Interplay ■ RPG in the mould of the original Doom beater

Taking the engine of the seminal Descent and then using it to run an RPG was a good idea – but three years ago. Dated, flawed and, ultimately, hugely tedious. ★

Destruction Derby 2

■ Racing ■ 1-10 players (turn-taking) ■ Psygnosis

Hit-and-run rivalry Fine as a normal racing game, but better as an all-out smash-'em-up that gives edge-of-your-seat thrills, coupled with gorgeous visuals and images of your car as it disintegrates. Great tracks, a genuine impression of speed and smart computer cars, too. Yay! ★★★★

Diablo
■ Strategy/RPG
■ 1-4 players ■ Blizzard
Hack 'n' slash adventure
A real-time strategy RPG that's incredibly intuitive, with hidden depths and complexity to be found if you delve deeper into its dark and sticky innards. A whole load of monster-killing and spell-casting to keep bearded types happy, absolutely massive and it looks like a dream too. ★★★★

The graphics, battles, spells and the story may not be as involving the second time, but they serve as a reminder of FFVII's true strength – as a fantastic tale that had the world sitting up all night just to see what happened next.

LONG TERM TEST

Final Fantasy VII

Pointless Leviathan or RPG heaven?



■ Do you remember when Final Fantasy VII came out on PlayStation? Of course you do – 95%+ scores from every mag, with otherwise normal people suddenly turning their hands to the bearded pursuit of role-playing. But the time has come for a horrifying question: is it still as good?

Returning to FFVII is partly disappointing – spending hours battling through the game isn't something you want to repeat. Guiding Cloud and friends through the same places, conversations and fights will just leave you feeling empty inside.

But then, FFVII isn't designed to reward just

dipping in and out. The Chocobo races and the bonus arcade games are still there to tempt you back for an hour or two's play, but the main game's done, dusted, and closed to all but a complete retry from the start. FFVII is a story designed to grab you and not let go; a linear tale that reveals its many twists and turns over hours of play.

The graphics, battles, spells and the story may not be as involving the second time, but they serve as a reminder of FFVII's true strength – as a fantastic tale that had the world sitting up all night just to see what happened next.

Creatures 2

■ Breed-'em-up ■ 1 player
■ Mindscape ■ Raise another family of cuddly creatures

Less a game, more an exercise in parenthood, the main idea behind Creatures 2 is to breed your race of furry critters and then use them to search for biotechnical bits and bobs. This new release has more options, more enemies and more places to explore. ★★★★

Conflict: Freespace The Great War

■ Space combat ■ Multi-player ■ Interplay

Sprawling, intricate, space shooter Escort this, protect that, shoot the other – Conflict might at first seem like a direct X-wing vs Tie-Fighter rip-off, but it's more the game X-wing should have been. Watch for the superb explosions, cleverly designed missions and plenty of replayability. ★★★★

Or try: X-Wing vs Tie Fighter

■ Multi-player ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment ■ Impressive Star Wars-based shooter. ★★★★

masterpiece Combat/adventure in a medieval/fantasy world with a third person/ sweeping camera viewpoint. The engine, which calculates animation by looking at both bone joints and gravity, does the biz, but being able to win every battle in one move defeats the purpose somewhat. ★★

Or try: Tomb Raider 2

■ 1 player ■ EIDOS Interactive
■ A second outing for the lovely Lara. ★★★★

Dune 2000

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ Electronic Arts

The grand-daddy of strategy re-invigorated The original Dune invented the real-time strategy game. This new version houses 27 levels and three "tribes" to choose from, but it doesn't offer any further obvious improvements aside from the new visuals. It's too simplistic to be great, and faces potentially better up-and-coming rivals. ★★★

Dungeon Keeper

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ EA Classics ■ Classic

dungeon management Run your own murky torture chamber in this strategy-laden epic. Difficult at first, especially with the mixture of game modes and cameras, but the sense of humour and finely-tuned gameplay will eventually hook you. ★★★★

Emergency: Fighters for Life

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ ASCII

The world's first 999-'em-up A real-time strategy game based on the work of the emergency services might sound terrible – and it is. It's set against the clock, and the disasters become increasingly catastrophic over time, but the graphics are too small, the controls too fiddly and the AI too terrible for you to have any fun. ★★

FA Premier League Football Manager '99

■ Sports ■ 1 player ■ Electronic Arts Be Glenn Hoddle, but better

Including both Scottish and English divisions, and giving you plenty of coaching and business matters to deal with, this is the most realistic football management title out there – your decisions really affect the turnout of games. The icing on the cake are the commentary by John Motson and the lovely-looking 3D kickabouts. ★★★★

Falout

■ RPG ■ 1 player ■ Interplay

Puzzle-solving post-Armageddon An RPG set in a post-nuclear world, with a whole load of quests to take part in and a good choice of characters.

It's old-school in its use of points building and heavy emphasis on talking to characters, and it starts off slowly, but the action and interaction soon blend together well. ★★★★

F1 Racing Simulation

■ Driver ■ 1-8 players ■ Ubisoft

Driving for would-be Demons All the stats and tracks are here, and the handling and controls are perfect. There's a slight lack of realism and customisation options, but it's very fast and offers a real challenge. Don't expect to be able to smash into verges without paying the ultimate price – your death. ★★★★

Or try: Alain Prost Grand Prix

■ 1 player ■ Ocean ■ Similar but less realistic. ★★

F-15

■ Flight sim ■ 1 player ■ Electronic Arts

Absurdly accurate F-15 sim Stunning 3D graphics (if your PC can cope), but oh so much more of a strict

simulation than a game. Great for would-be pilots. ★★★

The Fifth Element

■ Puzzle ■ 1 player ■ Ubisoft

Obscure futuristic movie tie-in Twenty three levels of Tomb Raider-style shenanigans, made to the usual recipe: an equal measure of running and jumping, and a big "knob" of shooting. The difficult controls and camera difficulties hamper the gameplay, though, and it bears less relevance to the film than you'd think. ★★

Fighter Pilot

■ Flight sim ■ 1-2 player ■ Electronic Arts

Sky-based shooting for avid pilots A flight sim stripped of all the complicated stuff, leaving a shoot-'em-up-based flyabout. There's plenty of weapons, and a 3D card will bring the most from the detailed graphics, but continuous shooting at ground installations and other planes will soon have your eyelids drooping. ★★★

Gex 3D: Enter the Gecko

■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ Ubisoft A 3D gecko in sunglasses. Obviously



Obviously

Originally debuted on Panasonic's flash-in-the-pant 3DO, the elements are all in place for a good romp: simple controls, variety of levels and sub-quests a-go-go. The bad points are a toss up between the unwieldy camera angles, and Leslie "Carry On" Philip's voice-over – it's a close call. ★★★

The Golf Pro

■ Sports ■ 1 player ■ Empire Interactive Novel

golf sim Uses a novel swing system rather than the usual power-bar, which makes play much more difficult initially, though it does simplify with practice. The scenery in both courses, although a pre-rendered cop-out, will make you want to bring a picnic to the game, and the ball physics are superb. ★★★★

Or try: Actua Golf 2

■ 1-4 players ■ Gremlin Interactive Interactive ■ Realistic and fun golf simulation. ★★★★

Grand Theft Auto

■ Crime-'em-up ■ 1 player ■ Take 2

Interactive Drugs, death and driving Notorious for its lack of scruples, encouraging killing bystanders and trafficking of drugs, GTA gives you a sense of freedom as you drive around massive cities. The graphics are disappointing, but the missions are enjoyable, even if repetitive. However, games where failure results in you being plonked back at the start of a level are asking for trouble. ★★★★

Hardwar

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ Gremlin Interactive

Exciting mix of trading and combat A step in the right direction – this unofficially updates the great 8-bit game Elite for the Labour-driven, Spice Girl-warbling, Sunset Beach-goggling late '90s. The environment is enormous, but the gameplay is hampered by too much waiting around and not enough doing. ★★★★

Or try: Privateer 2: The Darkening

■ 1 player ■ Sierra ■ Take to the clouds. ★★★★

Hedz

■ First-person shooter ■ 16-players ■ Acclaim

Comedy head-swapping shoot-'em-up Strap heads on to your alien torso, adopt their attributes and weapons, and proceed to wander about killing other aliens. Adding to your collection of heads is great, but chasing aliens for keys to open every successive door soon gets tiring and dull. ★★

Heart of Darkness

■ Platformer ■ 1 player ■ Ocean

Visually stunning runabout It was five years in the making and, oh so very nearly worth the wait. Stretches the 2D platformer out as far as it will go without it snapping straight back and hurting your fingers. The backdrops are beautiful, and there are puzzles a-plenty. ★★★★

The House of the Dead

■ First-person shooter ■ 1 player ■ Sega

3D **Fire-button finger-bleeder** The setting is a



Die By The Sword

■ Adventure ■ 1 player ■ Interplay

Flawed combat

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spooky old mansion. The baddies? Zombies. Any good? Well, sadly, not really. ★★

IF/A-18E: Carrier Strike Fighter

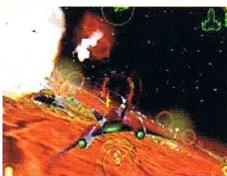
■ Flight sim ■ 1 player
■ Interactive Magic Fly

planes about Simulating a craft that won't be flying for five years (but based on enough test data to ensure authenticity), *Strike Fighter*, for the most part, looks absolutely gorgeous. The missions are varied and convincing, and your success alters what you're offered to do in future levels. Unfortunately, you'll need at least a PII before you can run it properly, though. ★★★★

Interstate 76

■ Racing ■ 1-8 players
■ Activision '70s retro

challenge Taking its cue from the Twisted Metal games, this racer-come-shooter suffers from jerky and simplistic graphics and repetitive gameplay, although you're sure to find plenty of fun in just driving about, and shooting up scenery and other vehicles. The ongoing plot and huge candyfloss afros will satisfy all but the most obsessive '70s-phile. ★★★



Incoming: Lux et Rubor

■ First-person shooter

1 player ■ Rage Software Fancy, multi-vehicle blaster

A real triumph of conventionality over originality, *Incoming* features every shoot-'em-up cliché known, but the gorgeous visuals, wide variety of vehicles and frenetic finger action prove there's plenty of life in the genre yet. ★★★★

Jetfighter: Fullburn

■ Flight sim ■ 1 player
■ Take 2 Interactive Flying, with a plot

Exhilarating flight sim, where the missions are glued together with video sequences. Tiring at times, but with a very nice feeling of not being too overwhelmingly techie. ★★★
Or try: F22: ADF
■ 1 player ■ DID ■ Top-gun fun. ★★★

Jimmy White's 2: Cueball

■ Sports ■ 2 players
■ Virgin Interactive

Entertainment Snooker

loopy nuts are we Superb snooker and pool sim, with a highly playable game engine and wacky darts, draughts and fruit machine sub-games. ★★★★
Or try: Virtua Pool 2
■ Multi-player ■ Interplay ■ Pool without the celebrity. ★★★★

Klingon Honor Guard

Shooter ■ 1-16 players

■ MicroProse Pasty-headed Doom-style exploits This is based on the excellent *Unreal* engine, which automatically makes it beautiful and speedy. A full complement of niggling factors, such as suddenly completing levels without even realising you were anywhere near the end of a mission, are negated by the sheer intensity of the big-weapon shooting action. Those crazy Klingon boys, eh? ★★★★

Last Bronx

■ Fighter ■ 1-2 players
■ Sega Japanese fisticuffs

It's fast-moving, with a number of weapons included to make life more interesting, but the meagre number of characters and moves bring it crashing down to Earth. The lack of support for 3D cards doesn't help its cause and, curiously for a fighting game, the multi-player just doesn't excite. ★★

LBA 2

■ Adventure ■ 1 player
■ Electronic Arts Odd-looking mystical adventure

The same other-worldly visuals and characters seen in *Little Big Adventure*, shoved into a beautiful 3D world. The control system is still almost unimaginably annoying, and the roving camera makes things difficult, but this is as involving as any good bedtime story should be. ★★★★

Links LS '99

Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ EIDOS Interactive Golf for it!

The visuals are lovely, as you'd expect, but it takes time to draw the scenery and – predictably – *Links* uses the same power-bar system as all other golf games. Still, with four courses, eight players at your disposal and 30 modes of play, who's complaining? ★★★★

Or try: Microsoft Golf 1998
■ Sports ■ Multi-player
■ Microsoft Motion captured players and dodgy controls. ★★

Magic & Mayhem

■ Strategy ■ 1 player ■ Virgin Interactive Swords and sorcery in strategy shocker

Featuring knights, wizards and all the usual stuff, this real-time strategy gives you a surprisingly

uncommon spell-casting, creature-creating environment. The main characters are well-designed, the story effortlessly sucks you in and the 30 maps are varied and realistic enough to make you feel like you're there. ★★★★

MechCommander

■ Strategy ■ 1 player
■ MicroProse Real time strategy, management and big robots

Based on the *BattleTech* board game, but a strategical step away from the action of previous *MechWarrior* games, Commander boats clearly laid out logistics, intricate detail and superb level design. ★★★★
Or try: MechWarrior 2
■ 1 player ■ Activision ■ Huge, hulking exoskeleton robots. ★★★



MicroMachines V3

■ Racing ■ 1-4 players
■ Codemasters Top-down, miniature racing

Embrace a world where you race round tabletop tracks in a mini car, boat or ice cream van, preferably against as many other human players as possible. As good on the PC as on any of the consoles. ★★★★

Monster Truck Madness 2

■ Racing ■ 1 player
■ Microsoft Big trucks, huge

tyres Full of action and arcade-friendly, but the handling of the giant trucks is too light, instantly removing the feeling that you are racing around in a huge truck with the ability to crush anything on Earth. Big on wheels, but small on atmosphere. ★★

Motorcross Madness 3D

■ Racing ■ 1 player
■ Microsoft Motorbikes and dirt tracks

A huge array of racing modes and more tracks than you can shake a Kawasaki at. *Madness* offers enough of a racing thrill to deem motorbike racing games worthy of the PC. No two-player mode, though. ★★★★
Or try: Moto Racer
■ 1-2 players ■ Electronic Arts.
■ More of the same. ★★★

Motorhead

■ Racing ■ Multi-player
■ Gremlin Interactive

Futuristic sports-car visual drooler Nine cars, slick track design, a myriad of tiny road-side animations (like monorails and space craft) and the right difficulty pitch: a cinch to drive, but hard to drive well. Fast, too. ★★★★
Or try: Screamer Rally
■ 1 player ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment. ■ Watch that scenery fly by. ★★★★

NBA Live 98

■ Sports ■ 1-4 players
■ Electronic Arts Ball in the basket fun

Although it is slightly too easy, mainly because of the limited computer opposition, *NBA Live 98* was never pretending to accurately represent basketball. However, it controls well, looks fantastic and provides a wealth of options, enabling you to tailor the game as you wish. ★★★★

Newman/Haas Racing

Racing ■ 1-8 players
■ Psygnosis F1 drive-about

Sixteen drivers, 11 3D tracks, the pits, smooth and fast racing, and everything else – so what's wrong? The sound is terrible, the

crashes a non-event, the visuals have packed up and gone home, and the right-angled corners are someone's idea of a joke. ★★★★

Obsidian

■ Adventure ■ 1 player
■ Ocean Spooky graphic and

FMV adventure A typical PC adventure game that could have stood out from the crowd but drops far too many baffling puzzles into the otherwise bumper crop of thought-out, absorbing head-scrappers. The characters also feel about as interactive as a travel agent trying to book you a holiday – not very at all. ★★

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

Platformer ■ 1 player ■ GT

Interactive 2D platforming with puzzling chucked in

Budget release of a pointless conversion from the PlayStation, with dated gameplay that involves merely moving from one screen to the next. It's just console fodder, converted for the sake of it – the PC doesn't need this kind of thing. ★★★



Outwars

■ Adventure ■ 1 player
■ Microsoft Starship

Troopers: the (unofficial)

Drop down a lift shaft in an overrun research installation, then try to raise a cargo lift as big as a Quake level. *Outwars* innovates, and breathes fresh air into this 3D shoot-'em-up/arcade adventure *Quake/Tomb Raider* cross-over. The over-zealous sudden-death routines are irritating, though. ★★★★

Or try: Terra Nova

■ 1-12 players ■ Virgin Interactive

Entertainment ■ Got a spare brain? You'll need it. ★★★

Pinball Soccer

■ Pinball ■ 1 player
■ Pin-Ball Games More

Themed pinball Pinball, where the table looks like a football pitch. Suffers from the same unfortunate steep perspective fate as *Judge Dredd Pinball*. ★★

Or try: Judge Dredd Pinball
■ Pinball ■ 1-2 players ■ Pin-ball
■ Three guesses... ★★

Police Quest SWAT 2

■ Strategy ■ 1 player
■ Sierra Control the thin

blue line In the mould of the earlier *Syndicate Wars*, *SWAT 2* has you directing copper to blow the crims away. It's ruined by its subject matter – you're forced to try dull old negotiation before gun-play – and impossibly small graphics, and the inexplicable jerkiness makes control difficult. ★

Populous: The Beginning

Strategy ■ 1 player
■ Electronic Arts Try your

hand at omnipotence You're God! Build huts, breed warriors and braves, get new spells to alter the land, fight and conquer enemies, and all that. Essentially the original game all over again, but it's a lot easier this time and, of course, it's all gone 3D. Feel the depth and the intelligent learning curve, and you'll be playing for hours. ★★★★

Powerboat Racing

■ Racing ■ Multi-player
■ Interplay Watersports

Close inspection of *Miami Vice* and James Bond will tell you that speedboats are cool. Thanks to

clumsy, blocky, jerky visuals and stunted gameplay, *PowerBoat Racing* is not. ★★

Or try: MotorHead

■ 1-2 player ■ Gremlin Interactive
■ Futuristic, speedy, gorgeous.

★★★



Premier Manager '98

■ Sports manager ■ 1 player
■ Gremlin Interactive

Football managerial action

All dressed up but nowhere to go – there's an accurate database update, but the imperfections that bugged PM's previous incarnation remain, and now stick out further than Jimmy Hill's chin. Still, it's only 20 nicker. ★★★

Pro Pinball: Timeshock!

■ Pinball ■ 1 player ■ GT

Interactive It's a pinball

game Only one table? Once the shock of this has worn off, the perfect ball physics and over-the-top range of flashing lights, bells and whistles will keep silver-balled fans happy for months. ★★★★

Prost Grand Prix

■ Racing ■ 1 player
■ Infogrames Variable F1 sim

An okay F1 sim, with a discrepancy in the difficulty levels that has you driving like a member of the McLaren team when you have the automatic gears and brakes turned on, and like that woman from *Driving School* when they're not. ★★★

Or try: Grand Prix 2

■ 1 player ■ MicroProse ■ Geoff Crummard's absurdly accurate F1 sim. ★★★

Quake II

■ First-person shooter

■ 1-infinite players

■ Activision Seminal first-person baddie-beater

Basically more of the same, but that's more of one of the finest games in the world. *Quake II* is undoubtedly best played over a network or on the Internet, and offers bigger, better (although not cleverer) monsters, massive guns, improved level designs and a fully customisable game engine. ★★★★★

Or try: Rebel Moon Rising

■ 1-4 players ■ GT Interactive

■ Ugly and boring, unusual voice control option. ★

Rainbow Six

Strategy ■ 1-16 players

■ Red Storm Stealthy first-person hostage action

Starring SAS-style combat heroes, this is a third-person shooter set in real-life terrorist situations. The healthy dose of realism works wonders, and the overwhelming amount of strategy makes it more cerebral than your usual shoot-'em-up. A shame, then, that your team-mates often act like idiots. ★★★★

Redjack: Revenge of the Brethren

■ Adventure ■ 1 player
■ THQ Derring-do on the

oceans Point-and-click adventure, with great action sequences, but an unconvincing story line. ★★

Ring

Adventure ■ 1 player ■ Cryo

Opera-based adventure, believe it or not With Wagner's music playing constantly in the background, and the different worlds throwing up characters who are often wont to sing at you,

STAB IN THE BACK

Full of holes

Aero Gauge, ASCII, April 1998



If you learn only one thing from this copy of *Arcade*, make it this: Be wary of games named after chocolate bars. You might just get lucky; fine *Doom* clone *Marathon* (on the Apple Macintosh) is one example. But the risks associated with candy-named titles become all too apparent when you take a close look at what is probably the very worst game on the N64. Say hello to *Aero Gauge*.

Developer ASCII seems to have one purpose for *Aero Gauge* in mind. "Go

and be *WipEout*," ASCII told it, "and the cash from N64 owners desperate for a decent racer will come rolling in!" And several months later, still rubbing its hands and patting itself on the back, ASCII took one look at the finished product and realised it had forgotten to put a game in.

Aero Gauge's *WipEout* pretensions are laughable. Where Psygnosis' view of the future consisted of technology-saturated cities rich in Designer's Republic neon splendour, ASCII's crystal ball reveals a world

re-constructed in pastel-coloured Lego, and where a permanent fog prevents anyone from seeing more than ten metres ahead. This misting feature means the track's twists and turns are drawn on screen so slowly that you've almost gone past them before they appear and, after losing control and crashing your garish cardboard-box for the 15th time, the next thing that hits a wall will be the *Aero Gauge* cartridge itself. Meanwhile, the only place you'll catch sight of the CPU opposition is on the starting grid.

There's a simple moral to this story. Don't buy *Aero Gauge*. If you want to experience futuristic racing, buy Nintendo's *F-Zero X*, which offers the intricate controls and first-place jostling so glaringly absent from this feeble excuse for a game. Oh, and should ASCII ever release *Toblerone Challenge*, don't you dare say we didn't warn you. ★ Mark Green

Ring is a little bit different. It looks gorgeous, it's utterly mad, but at the end of the day it's the same set of adventure-style puzzles as every other similar title. ★★

Riverworld

Strategy ■ 1 player ■ Cryo
Time-warping real-time strategy

Strategy A God sim that places a variety of time zones into the mix, and sets the whole shebang in Victorian times. Similar to *Populous* in places (enlist the help of random persons, get them to build houses and then take over those of their neighbours), it's ultimately tedious, repetitive and unlikely to excite anyone. ★★

Roland Garros 1998: The French Open

Sports ■ 1-4 players
■ Grolier Interactive

Accurate tennis sim *Garros*'s great strength (making sure you have complete control over where the ball will land as you hit it) is also its weakness (making it far too easy to beat the computer opponents). There are 50 players, each of the four courts look lovely and, despite the limited options and near-invisible ball, you'll be "love-ing" this one. ★★

Sentinel Returns

Puzzler ■ 1 player
Psygnosis One of the most original puzzle games ever An 8-bit classic, *Sentinel* was the most bizarre concept for a game: absorbing trees around a 3D landscape, while avoiding the gaze of the Sentinel at the top. Just don't expect to be quite so amazed second time around. ★★★

Sid Meier's Gettysburg!

Strategy ■ 1-8 players
■ Electronic Arts ■ Classics Re-live obscure American battles Sid Meier turns out another historically accurate, yet genuinely fun, real-time strategy game. Take control of either side in the American Civil War and you get equal measures of both good-head-hunting strategy and all-out shooting action. ★★★★
Or try: Project Airos
■ 1-2 players ■ Infogrames
■ Fun for a while, but it's only a short while. ★★

Spec Ops: Rangers Lead the Way

Strategy ■ 1 player
■ Gameteck First-person war sim Complete five separate missions where stealth and the need to learn tactics are vital. The graphics and AI are top-notch, and the ability to control two men via one set of controls is innovative, though it doesn't always work. You will need a high-spec PC and graphics acceleration. ★★★

StarCraft

Strategy ■ Multi-player
■ Blizzard Entertainment Real-time strategy The same mix of building, research, resource management and combat as its prequel, but with enough intricacy and sidesteps to inject life into the genre. ★★★★

Starship Titanic

Adventure ■ 1 player
■ Zabla Entertainment Douglas Adams' foray into adventure gaming Co-written by Mr Hitchhiker himself, *Titanic* is a text-driven adventure that actually works. It's witty, logical and engaging, if just a tiny bit frustrating at times. And it's got Terry Jones. ★★★★

Star Wars: Supremacy

Strategy ■ 1 player Write your own plot Set in a time after the destruction of

the original Death Star, *Supremacy* gives you the chance to command the entire Rebel Alliance or Empire and re-write *Star Wars* history. An R2-D2-with-the-top-removed-sized bin full of strategies gets the thumbs up, but the over-complex gameplay may deter. ★★★

Street Fighter Alpha: Warrior's Dream

Beat-'em-up ■ 1-2 players
■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment The nth version of the world's most famous fighting game More coin-op-to-PC shenanigans, with manga-style graphics, lots of new characters and Super Combos. Ken's hair seems to have grown a bit, too. Or maybe he's just had it styled. ★★★★

Sub Culture

Shooter ■ 1-4 players
■ Ubisoft Deep-sea space-style epic Tries to be a futuristic, underwater trading/shooting game, but hasn't got the depth (ho, ho) or immediacy to pull it off. It looks lovely, and there's a worthy amount of buying/selling action, but there isn't enough to do, and ultimately you just won't care. ★★★

Team Apache

Flight sim ■ 1 player
■ Mindscape Convincing chopper sim Few other flight sims introduce the novice in such a friendly way, before proceeding to let all hell break loose around them in such terrifyingly convincing fashion. Recommended. ★★★★
Or try: Total Air War
■ Flight sim ■ Multi-player ■ DiD/Ocean ■ Hey you, up in the sky. ★★★★

Theme Hospital

Strategy ■ 1 player ■ EA Classics Ailment-based real-time strategy Assume the role of hospital manager, in a quest to build the perfect emergency ward and cure your patients of their comedy illnesses. Interesting at first, but gradually becomes more and more repetitive until you'll have had enough. Also – it isn't funny. ★★★★

Titanic: Adventure Out of Time

Adventure ■ 1 player ■ Europe's Cheap and nasty sunk-ship-based nonsense Nothing at all to do with the film, and so bad you'll be praying for the bloody thing to hit an iceberg just to rouse you from your boredom. ★★

TOCA Touring Car Championship

Driver ■ 1-8 players
■ Codemasters Realistic car handling With a series of cars that handle, look and even sound different, and a level of accuracy in the tracks and stats maintained to the finest degree, *TOCA Touring Car* would be a truly essential purchase even without the realistic graphics. It's racing at its finest – why don't you own it? ★★★★★
Or try: Test Drive 4 ■ 1-4 players ■ Electronic Arts ■ Fast but boring. ★★

Tomb Raider III

Puzzle ■ 1 player ■ EIDOS Interactive The intelligent girl with the gun's back A tendency toward sudden death, coupled with the same inadequate controls and frustrating, difficult puzzles. But it's *Tomb Raider!* Intelligent level design. Gob-smackingly gorgeous graphics. And this time, there're pathways to choose from to help keep you up all night with Lara. ★★★★

Total Annihilation

Strategy ■ 1-8 player ■ GT Replay Futuristic strategy

nonsense More intense than your *Command & Conquer*s and the like, and as easy to use as an inflatable sheep. This manages to be easy for beginners and yet challenging for experts, the battles are great and there're plenty of patches and additions available on the Web, too. Buy this or feel stupid. ★★★★

Total Soccer

Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ Live Media Three guesses... Top-down footy, circa 1990. ★★

Triple Play '99

Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Electronic Arts Baseball for the fans Baseball isn't the most exciting sport in the known universe, so we command *TP '99* for doing a fine job of translating it for the PSX. With the option of just a single game or a complete 170-game tournament, Internet games and absolutely loads of players and stadiums to choose from, this is the simulation of choice for batfans. ★★★★



The X-Files

Adventure ■ 1 player ■ Fox Interactive Spooky cash-in tie-in? Sounds like a case for Mulder and Scully

It may just be a pile of video clips stuck together with VirtualCinema glue, but the seven weeks of exclusive filming, FBI notebook-full of trainspotter references and relative freedom of movement elevate it above the standard of most point-and-click adventures. ★★★

Or try: Blade Runner

■ 1 player ■ Virgin Interactive Entertainment ■ More film tie-in shenanigans. ★★★★

Ultima Collection

RPG compilation
■ Number of players varies ■ Electronic Arts Seminal titles collected Bringing together *Ultima* games from the last 20-or-so years, and presenting ten games from the series in the process, this collection suffers the same fate as most retro groupings; yesterday's faves are, in reality, quite dull compared to today's delights. Criminally omits a couple of games like *Ultima Underworld*. The shame! ★★★★



Unreal

First-person shooter
■ Multi-player ■ GT Interactive Doom dometastic

This has to be the fastest, most enjoyable *Doom* clone available for the PC to date. It's completely packed with luscious scripted moments, a fully pumped-up atmosphere, strictly intelligent denizens and enough eye candy to rot your lashes. The slightly poor weapons do sometimes give the feeling that you are defending your corner with nothing more dangerous than a pair of curling tongs, but with novelties such as the simulated deathmatch for those who don't know a modem from a moped, *Unreal* deserves all the attention that you can possibly give it. ★★★★

Urban Assault

Strategy ■ 1 player ■ Microsoft Post-nuclear

Skirmish Battle alien scum in an adventure marred ever-so slightly by blurred textures, thin walls and some sharply polygonal structures. ★★★★

Or try: BattleZone

■ 1-2 players ■ Activision

■ Boardgame-based strategy. ★★★★

Wetrix

Puzzler ■ 1 player ■ Ocean

Tetris meets Populous You need to position the falling blocks on to a landscape to contain the water that rains down. Fun, but over-complicated. ★★★★

Or try: Super Fighter

■ 2 Turbo ■ 1-2 player ■ Virgin

Interactive Entertainment ■ Great title, great game. ★★★★

Wreckin' Crew

Racing ■ 1-2 players ■ Telestar

Stock cars, big weapons and the open road

A graph of Interest (on the y scale) versus Time Playing *Wreckin' Crew* (on the x scale) would start high as you fiddle with the weapons and try out all the cars, but plummet (with a gradient of -15) as the novelties wear off and the bland tracks kick in. ★★★★

Wing Commander: Prophecy

Space epic ■ 1 player ■ Electronic Arts Another intergalactic instalment

Includes the usual appalling acting and over-emphasis on movie cut scenes that are now a staple of this space adventure series. The in-game graphics are good, although sometimes lapse, and while the combat is fun occasionally, it does get a tad repetitive. ★★★

World Cup 98

Sports ■ 1-20 player ■ Electronic Arts Licensed

Kickabout Judged by graphics and licensing (as football games often are), this one wins hands down. But, while improving a little on *Road to the World Cup*, it also enables you to play smooth and exciting games (with or without the easy-to-pull-off fancy moves), and there is even a limited strategy element. Goal! ★★★★★

Or try: World League Soccer

■ 98 ■ 1-4 players ■ EIDOS

Interactive ■ Unremarkable soccer sim. ★★★



X-COM: Interceptor

Space strategy ■ 1 player ■ MicroProse Latest in the long line

The combination of real-time strategy and 3D action is perfected just as smoothly and effectively as the mix of strategy and tactical infantry combat in the other games. And the result? Another corker. ★★★★

Or try: X-COM: Apocalypse

■ 1-2 player ■ MicroProse

■ The prequel. ★★★★

N64

1080° Snowboarding

Racing ■ 1-4 players ■ Nintendo

It's a snow-boarding game

The Wave Race team does it again, with a brilliant range of modes, plenty of tricks to pull off, loads of boards and loads of courses. As well as looking absolutely gorgeous, this snow-

bound board sim offers beautiful controls and brilliant replays, and the stunts are suitably difficult to complete. ★★★★

All Star Baseball

Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Acclaim Entertainment

Realistic bat-on-ball action

Makes baseball seem beautiful, with smooth-looking players and gorgeous backgrounds. It's much more of a simulation than other titles, and so a lot more thoughtful and challenging as a result. This, coupled with the range of stats and options, means wide smiles all round for baseball fans. ★★★★

Banjo-Kazooie

3D platformer ■ 1 player ■ Nintendo/Rare Bizarre

bear-bird crossover With beautiful levels which beg you to explore them, and genuine challenge, and variety provided by the occasional transformation into other animals, this very nearly knocks cocky old Mario off his perch. And it's the first Rare game not to include an eye-wincing amount of cute. ★★★★

Bio Freaks

Fighting ■ 1-4 players ■ GT Interactive/Midway

Arm-attachment beat-'em-up Watch out for massive missile attacks and arms flying off all over the place, but beware the gimmicky up-in-the-air jet-pac bit that detracts from the main game.

There are plenty of characters and moves, it all looks lovely and there's loads of gore, but it just won't light your fire. ★★★★

Or try: Clayfighter 63 1/3

■ 1-2 players ■ Interplay

■ Alleged comedy beat-'em-up. *

Blast Corps

Destruct-'em-up ■ 1 player ■ Nintendo/Rare

Senseless structure smashing

A truly unique game (the closest comparison must be *oldie Rampage*). And indeed, knocking down buildings with a great range of vehicles is as much fun as it sounds. Initially the mass destruction is too easy, but the additional goals will soon have you tearing hair out from all over your body. Yes... even there. ★★★★

Body Harvest

RPG/shooter ■ 1 player ■ Gremlin Interactive

Bug-blasting, B-movie invasion; lots of aliens

Loads of weapons, 100 vehicles to drive around in and five varied levels single out this interesting blaster. The graphics are ropey, and the character dialogue terrible, but the mix of RPG and intense, panicky alien shooting works a treat, and it's so big you'll get lost more often than you'd expect. ★★★★

Bomberman 64

3D platformer ■ 1-4 players ■ Nintendo

Infamous multi-playing antics

Hudson finally loses its knack of pumping out great *Bomberman* games. The pure fun which made the multi-player game a classic is in tatters, and the one-player is like *Mario 64* with all its good bits – like the controls and variety – thrown in the bin. Steer well clear. ★★

Buck Bumble

Shooter ■ 1-2 players ■ Ubisoft

Honey-bee based shooting

Mission-based shooter with puzzle elements. There's a varied bunch of enemies, but the levels themselves aren't involving, and the boring looks and copious fogging effects make you feel that a limited amount of thought has been put into this offering. ★★★★

Bust-A-Move 2

Puzzler ■ 1-2 players ■ Acclaim

Entertainment ■ Face-melting futuristic racer. ★★★★

Acclaim Entertainment Bubble-matching puzzler

Hardly the best-looking game on the N64, but the sheer simplicity makes for a ridiculously addictive experience, especially against a friend. Arrange for someone to phone you at sporadic intervals to remind you to eat and sleep. ★★★★

Cruis'n World

Racing ■ 1-4 players ■ Nintendo Sequel to the

worst driving game ever Despite the slating received by the original, nothing has been done to improve the game engine in this sequel. It's too easy, and there's just too little variation across the 15 courses, all of which boast fuzzy graphics, difficult handling, boring multi-player options, simply appalling music and a total lack of speed. *

Diddy Kong Racing

Racing ■ 1-4 players ■ Nintendo/Rare Comedy

animal karting Very nearly laps *Mario Kart*, with its more complex and inventive one-player game, and superb graphics, but the multiplayer option is duller than a dull thing on a very dull day. And those super-cute characters – ugh! Take them away. ★★★★

Duke Nukem 64

First-person shooter ■ 1-4 players ■ GT

More bad-taste violence The bare-breasted ladies haven't survived the process of conversion from the PC, but you do get an inventive set of real-world-based levels, and plenty of monsters to blow apart. The four-player deathmatch is as fun as you'd expect shooting all your friends to be. ★★★★
Or try: Doom 64
■ 1 player ■ GT Interactive ■ Big guns shoot nasties. ★★★★

F1 World Grand Prix

Racing ■ 1-2 players ■ Nintendo

Fancy yourself as Damon Hill? Looking as good as real-life, with all the real cars, drivers, stats and other nonsense. There're plenty of mondays, too, whether your an arcade racer or true F1 fan, and the two-player mode rounds off the whole gorgeous package. "Let's see that again!" ★★★★

Fighters Destiny

Fighter ■ 1-2 players ■ Ocean

Laydeez and ah gentlemen, we present the world's best N64 fighter... Well-defined characters and plenty of moves make this, by default, the N64's *Tekken*. As with so many N64 games, it's too easy, but the excellent range of challenges ensures longevity. Brilliant speech, too. ★★★★

F-Zero X

Racing ■ 1-4 players ■ Nintendo

Quick-as-you-like space-age racer The fastest, smoothest racer in the whole wide world, largely thanks to a loss of graphical detail. The controls are sublime, the handling fantastic and the tracks horrifically difficult. The over-steep learning curve and cheating computer opponents spoil it a bit. But don't worry too much about that. ★★★★
Or try: Extreme G
■ Racer ■ 1-4 players ■ Acclaim Entertainment ■ Face-melting futuristic racer. ★★★★

**GoldenEye 007**

First-person shooter ■ 1-4 players ■ Nintendo/Rare
The world's first spy sim The game that causes little green lights to appear in the eyes of PC and PlayStation owners. A believable and immersive 3D world, with 20 challenging missions taking you from a snow-covered wasteland to the men's toilets. Four difficulty levels from Agent to 007, and the best multi-player game money can buy if you ever get bored of 1-player. Plus it's got James Bond in it. And Robbie Coltrane. And Sean Bean. ★★★★

Gex 64: Enter the Gecko

Platformer ■ 1 player ■ GT Interactive **Rubbish reptilian roam-about** Astonishingly simplistic platformer that proves far too linear. The camera hasn't a clue what it should be centring on, the graphics are laughable and the animation and level design have been devised by monkeys. Worst of all, it tries to be funny. Sigh. ★

Iggy's Reckin' Balls

Racing ■ 1-4 players ■ Acclaim Entertainment **Ugly spheres roll for their lives** Odd attempt at a new racer, where there's no need to do any manual turning. And – inevitably – it doesn't work. Monotonous tracks and the ugliest characters this side of *Byker Grove*. ★

ISS '98

Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Konami **Beautiful goal-mouth adventures** Almost identical to the original ISS 64, and so you get the same silky controls and wealth of options, which mean beautifully smooth football. There are lots of subtle improvements – the referee is always on the pitch and it's this, coupled with new camera angles, new kicks and better crosses and headers, that make it an essential purchase. Again. ★★★★

Kobe Bryant in NBA Courtside

Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Nintendo **Great basketball** It's the *Madden* of basketball games, and *Courtside* provides over 300 players and an intuitive control system, coupled with very smooth gameplay that behaves as you would expect real basketball to. Get in the hoop! ★★★★

Lylat Wars

Shooter ■ 1-4 players ■ Nintendo **Animal Magic in space** Loosely based on the SNES's *Starwing*, and intended to be a truly immersive movie-like experience, with cut-scenes that ape films like *Independence Day*. It's too easy, and it would have been nice to have a level select, but it's still addictive, well-crafted and frantic. ★★★★

Madden 64

Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ EA Sports **American football series update** Looks a little sparse, especially without the official logos that *Quarterback Club* offers, but the controls and game mechanics are so intuitive that you'll feel like you actually understand what's going on. Hut! Hut! Or something. ★★★★

Mario Kart 64

Racer ■ 1-4 players ■ Nintendo **Off! Mario takes to the racetrack** The original comedy racer returns. The one-player game is a lonely experience, especially with cheating computer karts, but the time-trial mode adds longevity, and the multi-player game is arguably the best on any platform. ★★★★

Mission: Impossible

Spy sim ■ 1 player ■ Infogrames **Tom Cruise in 3D round-about** Not bad looking, with great ideas (such as disguising yourself as other characters in order to progress) that should've turned this 3D stealth-'em-up to a potential *GoldenEye*-beater. Sadly, however, it's turned out a little bland. ★★

Mortal Kombat 4

Fighting ■ 1-2 players ■ GT Interactive **Mad, bad blood-filled fist fight** The *Mortal Kombat* series has become synonymous with fighting that's simplistic but faster than its rivals, and number four is no exception. It's a whole load of fun, and the 3D looks good, while keeping up an amusingly frantic pace. It's a bit too easy to pull off complicated moves, and there's no innovation, but this is still a laugh-a-minute fighter. ★★★★
Or try: MK Mythologies
■ 1 player ■ GT Interactive **Beat-'em-up/RPG marriage**. ★

**Mystical Ninja**

RPG ■ 1 player ■ Konami **Surreal adventure with a blue-haired maniac** More of an RPG-platform game than anything, the fundamental unfolding of the story is coupled with *Mario-style* platforming tasks, and is all the better for it. It's mammoth, and the only downer being that once you have completed it, you're unlikely to return to it. ★★★★

Nagano Winter Olympics

Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Konami **Simulation of less popular summer games sibling** Skating! Curling! Ski jump! Konami has taken these very dull events and fleshed them out by asking you to endlessly repeat sequences of key presses to force the grainy-looking characters to move. Very dull indeed. ★

Pilotwings 64

Flight sim ■ 1 player ■ Nintendo **Task-based flying about** Along with *Mario 64*, the game that launched the N64. Beautiful, realistic scenery, coupled with some of the hardest tasks this side of Mensa, make for a truly unique experience. Where else would you get spring-boots to take you 100 feet up? ★★★★

**Quake 64**

First-person shooter ■ 1-2 players ■ GT Interactive **PC owners have less to laugh about** Nothing wrong with this, but with no more than two players able to take part

at any one time, the multi-playering that made the original such great fun is now taking a back seat to the monotonous one-player game. And 2D enemies? Please, put us out of our misery now. ★★★★

San Francisco Rush

Racing ■ 1-2 players ■ GT Interactive **Big Cars, mean streets** The handling and controls aren't up to your average PlayStation racer, and there's also the Cellophane-over-the-screen blurry visuals we've come to expect from the N64. But it's fast, has excellent handling and a top two-player mode. ★★★★

Shadows of the Empire

Shooter ■ 1 player ■ Nintendo/LucasArts **Star Wars-licensed revelry** A curious mixture of all sorts of games, including *Doom*, space shoot-'em-ups and racers, that sadly doesn't really work. The good parts are too few, and the flaws so horrendous, that you're sure to be disappointed. One that's strictly for obsessive fans and crazed madmen. ★★★★

Snowboard Kids

Racing ■ 1-4 players ■ Nintendo **Mario Kart for the snowboard generation** This looks, sounds and plays very simplistically, but it's packed full of fun and liable to make you a load of new friends if you show them the multi-player game. The one-player game is challenging, if only for the computer boarders, who have some kind of 2001-style hatred of humans. ★★★★

Spacestation: Silicon Valley

Puzzle ■ 1 player ■ Take 2 **Interactive Animal-control puzzler (with nasty side)** Kill animals and take control of them to solve tricky puzzles. Graphics do their job well, the controls and puzzles are great, and the attention to detail is second to none. Inevitably, though, since it's a 3D game, you should expect some trouble from the camera. ★★★★

Starshot: Space Circus Fever

Platformer ■ 1 player ■ Infogrames **Weird French 3D platformer** As usual with 3D games, the unwieldy camera and over-fiddly controls are present and correct. Aside from that, the levels are large and the graphics almost too intricate, but there's too much wandering between one place and the next, and the necessary between-platform jumping isn't helped by those damn controls. ★★★★

**Super Mario 64**

3D platformer ■ 1 player ■ Nintendo **If you only buy one game this century...** The gold standard by which all videogames are judged. It was the first true 3D platformer for a brand new console, with the reputation of the world's number one game character at stake, and it's a total masterpiece. Huge levels, sublime controls and totally immersive gameplay. ★★★★

Top Gear Rally

Racing ■ 1-2 players ■ Nintendo **The best real-car racer on the N64** Not a rival for *Gran Turismo* and the like, but it's

fast and handles well. As with all good racers, the time trial mode will keep you coming back time and again. No Jeremy Clarkson though. Which is probably a very good thing. ★★★★

Turok 2

Shooter ■ 1-4 players ■ Acclaim Entertainment **Make dinosaurs extinct (just one more time)** Even without the addition of the 4Mb RAM Pak, this looks stunning, and the game itself is helped by impossibly large guns and no more of the precision jumping nonsense that marred its prequel. The tasks will appear slightly familiar if you're already a fan of *Doom*, and the difficulty is sometimes off the scale, but otherwise this is fan-bloody-tastic. ★★★★

Or try: Turok: Dinosaur Hunter

■ 1 player ■ Acclaim Entertainment ■ Make dinosaurs extinct once more. ★★★★

Wayne Gretzky 3D Hockey '98

Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ GT Interactive **Updated version of original ice hockey sim** Fast and smooth enough to make for an accurate interpretation of the too-quick-to-watch sport, but you need to persevere if you want to feel like you're actually taking control, and there's a distinct lack of challenge from the N64 opponents. ★★★★

**Wetrix**

Puzzler ■ 1-2 players ■ Ocean **Build lakes and fry 'em with fireballs** Much more of a successor to *Tetris* than it is to *Tetrisphere*. Initially as difficult as hell, but stick with it and the clear – if rather limited – tactics become obvious. A *Tetris*-like addiction will then take control of your life, and make your pets leave home. ★★★★

World Cup '98

Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ EA Sports **A football game with a big cock on the box** The FIFA license and dear old Des Lynham make this the public's choice, but the sluggish controls and disappointing visuals mean you'll be left with a sense of bitter disappointment – not unlike that experienced by avid England supporters after this year's World Cup. Or the one in 1990. ★★★★

WWF Warzone

Sports ■ 1-4 players ■ Acclaim Entertainment **Leotard-tastic** Looks good, but boring in one-player – there are only so many times that kicking someone in the smalls is amusing (once). But get your wrestling-loving mates to join in (if you can find any), and you can enjoy four-on-the-floor action. A novel create-a-player section rounds it off. ★★★★

**Cool Hand (Color)**

Card games ■ 1 player ■ Take 2 **Interactive It's a load of card games, innit?** Blackjack, solitaire and cribbage in one package, and the option to play to any country's rules. The graphics are nice enough, and the games are extensive, but isn't a pack of cards far cheaper? ★★★★

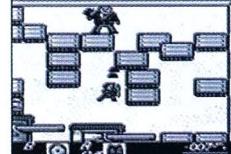
Blackjack, solitaire and cribbage in one package, and the option to play to any country's rules. The graphics are nice enough, and the games are extensive, but isn't a pack of cards far cheaper? ★★★★

Donkey Kong Land II: Diddy Kong's Quest

Platformer ■ 1 player ■ Nintendo **Mini monkey stories** Tries hard to squeeze the SNES version into the tiny grey handheld, and doesn't do too badly. The visuals are difficult to make out occasionally, thanks to their complexity, but the controls and wealth of secrets makes it a worthy Mario-style jump-about. ★★★★

Game & Watch Gallery

Compilation ■ 1 player ■ Nintendo **Four titles in one** Featuring *Fire*, *Manhole*, *Octopus* and *Oil Panic*, these games offer simple fun, having been transcribed faithfully from the original handheld wonders. There's a museum section, too, but – let's be honest here – weren't Game & Watches always a bit rubbish? ★★★★

**James Bond 007**

RPG ■ Nintendo ■ 1 player **Shaken or stirred?** Nothing remarkably innovative about this top-down Game Boy RPG, but it's nice to see one set in the modern world, even if it is a tad simple. The sparse mazes that form the levels are rather short and somewhat disappointing, but the tough end-of-level bosses and emphasis on sneaking about means this gets 004 stars. ★★★★

Legend of Zelda IV: Link's Awakening

RPG ■ Nintendo ■ 1 player **The endearing elf in B&W** A truly involving plot, coupled with beautiful graphics (including plenty of cut-scenes) and a story where the emphasis is on engaging the player in the same way as *FFVII*. It's incredibly difficult, with a vast range of interesting challenges – can *Zelda* do no wrong? ★★★★

Montezuma's Return (Color)

Platformer ■ 1 player **Max, returns** A little character jumping about, climbing ladders and collecting keys, just like the old days. The graphics are lovely, and it controls well enough over the numerous levels, but the '80s design and fall-too-far-and-die feature will have you chucking your Boy through a window. ★★★★

Power Quest (Color)

Fighter ■ 1-2 players ■ Sunsoft **Odd RPG/fight mixture** Lots of talking and shops, just like in an RPG, but at heart it's a pure beat-'em-up. The ability to upgrade your robot fighter is welcome, and the fighting has a bit more depth than usual Game Boy examples. It's different, but generally only okay. ★★★★

Reservoir Rat (Color)

Platformer ■ 1 player **Take 2 Traditional rat plat** You can shoot and jump in this game, which, unfortunately, is the major selling point. A platformer where you need to kill everything and get each item before moving on is obviously looking to annoy, and the controls make the whole process irritatingly difficult. A dead-average platformer. ★★★★

Street Fighter II

Fighter ■ Nintendo ■ 1 player **Classic small-scale** You can shoot and jump in this game, which, unfortunately, is the major selling point. A platformer where you need to kill everything and get each item before moving on is obviously looking to annoy, and the controls make the whole process irritatingly difficult. A dead-average platformer. ★★★★

beat-'em-up Although Nintendo has given this SNES conversion its best shot, it has only made the graphics good at the expense of speed, and the controls suffer for having only two buttons to play with. Even then, the computer fighters will be smacking you up with alarming regularity. ★★★★

Super Mario Land

Platformer ■ 1 player ■ Nintendo **The pipe man cometh** One of the Game Boy's original release games, and it still excels in most areas, despite its advanced nine years. The graphics are simple, but the subtlety of control and excellent level designs have been carried over to the bijou Nintendo with aplomb. ★★★★★

Tennis

Sports ■ 1-2 players ■ Nintendo **Racquet fun** Despite its simplicity, *Tennis* is one of the most enjoyable such sims on any platform. With an addictive two-player option, a hard-to-beat computer player and some very intuitive controls, this is a great game if you want to avoid real-life John McEnroe-style ill-placed-abuse nonsense. ★★★★★

Tetris

Puzzler ■ 1 player ■ Nintendo **It's a block thing** You know what about this. Shift falling blocks to create complete lines, so that they disappear. So simple, but the inventor deserved to make millions, thanks to his creation possessing truly addictive properties beyond words. The only game where the phrase "You must own this" can be used with complete sincerity. ★★★★★

Or try: Tetris Attack

■ 1 player ■ Nintendo ■ Reverse Tetris, fun for a while. ★★★★

Turok

Platformer ■ 1 player ■ Acclaim Entertainment **Dinky dinosaur hunt** Absolutely massive, and the high difficulty should prevent you from seeing the end sequence for quite a while, if ever. However, the quite shocking lack of game originality – nabbing bits from platformers left, right and centre, and dressing them up in fancy graphics – counts against it, as does its lack of fresh challenges per level. ★★★★

Wario Land II

Platformer ■ 1 player ■ Nintendo **Mario's arch-enemy returns** Features a novel "can't die" aspect and insists on your collecting all of the coins from each level, creating fist-clenching difficulty in the process. It's top-quality – fiendishly challenging, and good enough to breath new life into the platforming genre once again. ★★★★

Wave Race

Racing ■ 1-4 players ■ Nintendo **Original jet ski sim** This doesn't quite reach the standards of the N64 version, with small, top-down 2D graphics. It's near-impossible to beat the CPU opponents, but the controls are as intuitive as the N64 incarnation, and there are plenty of tracks to race on. You can't argue with a four-player mode, either. ★★★★

WWF Warzone

Sports ■ 1-player ■ Acclaim Entertainment **Men in Pants action** Although the graphics make this a bit of a looker, the animation is jerky and odd, and the game suffers from finger-snapping controls, which are too slow to be effective. Amuse yourself by considering the plight of all these poor greased men, though. ★★★★





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Compiled by | **Mark Green**

January 1991

Cool things were afoot **eight years ago** (and we're not talking about Vanilla Ice).



■ Lemmings: they sing, they dance, they suffer horribly by the hundred.



alone, for *Lemmings* was also a fiendishly well-designed puzzle game. Even *Omni*, the now defunct American popular science magazine, gushingly referred to it as, "the most original entertainment concept of 1991."

Among the unique aspects of *Lemmings* were the sound effects. The lemmings themselves could talk, screaming a very squeaky "Oh no!" prior to exploding, while voice samples were provided by sound artist Brian Johnston and his mum. The music, too, was part of the winning mix. But even this came about through a strange mixture of careful design, luck, and last-minute bodging, as composer Tim Wright explains.

"The original music, written by Brian Johnston, was based on famous movie themes, but then I got a call two weeks from launch telling me to recompose it, because we were in the shit as far as copyright went. So I just did the first things that came into my head." The resulting selection, including such nursery classics as 'How Much Is That Doggy...' and 'Old MacDonald', lent a slightly demented vibe to the proceedings, but soon had everyone humming along. According to Tim, though, the lemmings still weren't quite out of the woods. "One of the tunes I composed was a version of 'O' Little Town of Bethlehem', and three years later some guy rang up claiming the copyright for it. The rumours were that we ended up shelling out quite a bit because of that."

After numerous sequels, revisions, Christmas add-ons and the inevitable 3D update ("That wasn't one of the best," admits David), DMA sold the *Lemmings* concept wholesale to Psygnosis. The Liverpool-based outfit recently released *The Lemmings Collection* – a near-perfect conversion of the very first Amiga games – on PlayStation, thus keeping this golden oldie concept alive. **A**

Lemmings! You've just got to love 'em



Le's go!" shouted the blue-coated, green-haired little midget, and videogames would never be the same again. Launched on the Amiga eight years ago this month, DMA Design's *Lemmings* was odd-looking, cute, sick, difficult and – the final nail in its coffin, or so you might have thought – one of those boring old puzzle games. Yet it was converted to over 20 machines, scored a wacking football manager-like score of 110% from France's generous *Generation 4* magazine, and scooped more "Best Game of the Year" awards than Spin the Bottle.

Designed and programmed by David Jones, who remains head of Dundee's DMA Design, *Lemmings* placed hundreds of titular gnomes in a series of fiendishly headache-generating puzzles. Building on the old lemmings-all-follow-each-other-in-suicidal-leaps-into-the-sea notion, the little cherubs would pour forth from a trapdoor and, if left alone, stroll

innocently to their demise, courtesy of various death-inducing traps spread across the level. To prevent this massacre, a simple mouse-click gave your selected lemming(s) a job to do (it might be digging, building bridges or even exploding), enabling you to guide the required percentage of blue guys away from danger and safely "home" to the level's end.

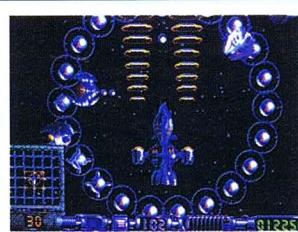
The secret of *Lemmings*' success was, in part, its screwed-up mixture of cloying cuteness and horrific gore. "The original idea came from a one-screen animation that a programmer, Mike Daley, did on the Amiga in his lunch hour," explains David. This animation showed a repeating cycle of lemmings being crushed, sliced, flamed and squashed. It was a striking visual that was carried across, essentially unchanged, to the final game. Soon, the sight of the tiny creatures wandering off a cliff, under a guillotine or into a roaring fire had players laughing their heads off.

But its success wasn't built on black humour

... before you know it. For sheer addictiveness, *Lemmings* ranks as one of the best, and one of the most original games I've played on the Amiga for a very long time.

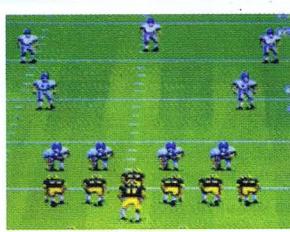
■ Critics loved *Lemmings*. Lots.

Games of the month | Already bored with *Zelda 64*? Check out what everyone was playing eight years ago...



Awesome

Publisher: Psygnosis
System: Amiga
■ Psygnosis was a company that prided itself on strong graphics, but was often criticised for neglecting gameplay. This vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up, however, delivered on all fronts. Unfortunately, it was bundled with a "free" T-shirt that added a fiver to the price.



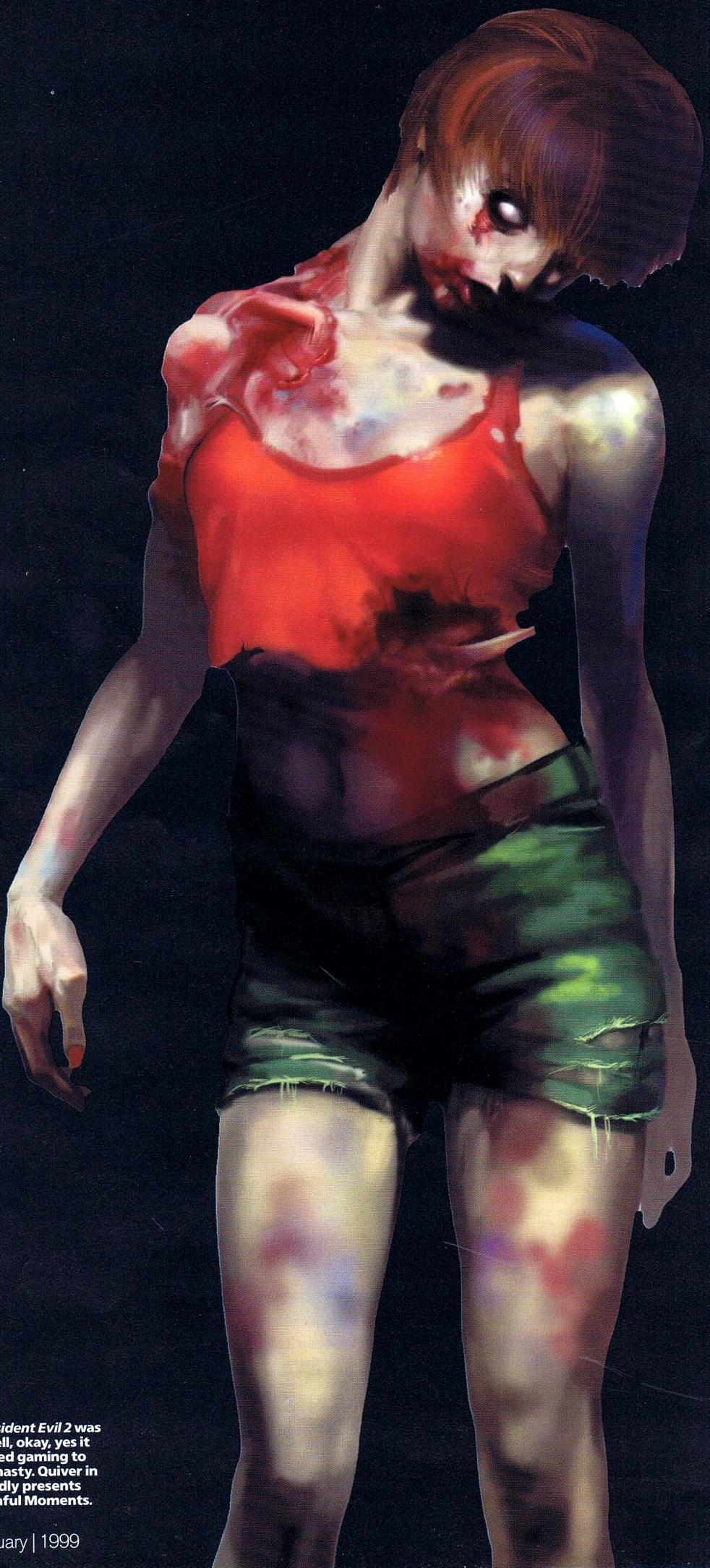
John Madden American Football

Publisher: Electronic Arts
System: Mega Drive
■ Endorsed by the American equivalent of Jimmy Hill, *John Madden Football* was the first sign that Electronics Arts would be a major player in the sports genre. It was also one of the first games Neil West ever reviewed. "I liked it so much, I moved to America," he says.



Mickey Mouse in the Castle of Illusion

Publisher: Sega
System: Mega Drive / Master System
■ A Super Mario clone, but with animation considered state-of-the-art at the time. A huge variety of levels and puzzles – and a distinct lack of Donald Duck – helped this fly from the shelves.



■ So, you thought *Resident Evil 2* was blood-splattered? (Well, okay, yes it was.) But we've trawled gaming to find 49 things just as nasty. Quiver in terror, as *Arcade* proudly presents Gaming's 50 Most Painful Moments.

Next Month

In February's
Arcade

**Don't
fancy
yours
much!**

But gaming sometimes offers even more repulsive treats than a date with a snap-necked zombie. Next month we reveal the 50 most wince-inducing, leg-crossing moments ever. Spines are ripped, bums are fried. It's horrible.

Dreamcast is here!

We report on Dreamcast's launch in Japan, test the very first machines into the UK, and talk to some of the first British owners about what they think of their hot new kit. Should you buy one? We'll see...

And!

We review the first batch of games, including *Virtua Fighter Tournament Battle*, *Godzilla Generations* and *Sega Rally 2*.

Plus!

The usual 40something pages of reviews, the full-length return of Coming Soon, *Tomb Raider III* makes its first Kick Ass appearance, a tribute to Zelda-creator Shigeru Miyamoto, and more.

**Arcade 3 on sale Wednesday,
13 January. Order your copy now.**

Great Gaming Moments

Tricking the Traps

Remembered by | Neil West

Doom II teaches that standing around doing nothing can (sometimes) be a virtue.



By the time I reached the "Tricks 'n' Traps" level of *Doom II*, I'd learned that hitting fast and early with maximum fire power was the best strategy. Indeed, it was the only reliable strategy. It didn't matter whether I was packing a chain saw, knuckle duster, double-barrelled shotgun or mountain-levelling rocket launcher – nothing got these single-minded alien scumbags off my back like wading in there and striking first.

It was a mind-set that had got me through all the levels up to this one, and I had faith in it. But it was also a mind-set that would lead to me getting completely and utterly stuck – trapped and slaughtered again and again in one particularly nasty, inhospitable little backwater.

Here's the scene: I would pass through a door and find myself at the back of a large underground bunker. With the entrance

locked behind me – so I couldn't return the way I'd come – I was sealed in with an entire legion of Cyber Demons, Imps and a fearsome Baron of Hell for company. Okay, so they were at one end of the bunker and I was at the other – and it seemed as if they hadn't noticed me yet – but it was clear that, with no windows and no visible exits, the only way out would be over a blood-spurting heap of steaming corpses.

So, skulking in the shadows for as long as possible, I'd sneak along the wall until I got as close as I dared and then let rip with all guns blazing. But no matter which of the monsters I attacked first, no matter what weapon I used, no matter how I ran, there were simply too many of them. The entire group would turn on me and under a barrage of fire my health would wear down to nothing. Dead.

For hours I plugged away. Nothing. Had I missed a bonus weapon in a previous level that I needed now? Was there a secret power-up lying around that I hadn't found? Was this a bug in the program? Erm, a faulty joystick? All the usual excuses rattled around, but secretly I knew the truth – this was one puzzle I simply couldn't solve.

And then: the faintest flicker of an idea.

It was clear that the only way out would be over a blood-spurting heap of corpses

Wanna play?

■ id software's *Doom* is one of the landmark computer games, right up there with *Space Invaders* and *Tetris*. If you've never played it, then buy a copy now – it's never too late to catch the bug. Originally released on the PC back in 1993, with the sequel out the following year, there are now versions for pretty much every system out there. The original PC models of the game are probably best, and are available as part of the *Final Doom* compilation from GT Interactive, priced around £20. PlayStation gamers get the next best versions – indeed, many prefer them to the PC originals – and these are also published by GT Interactive at budget price.

What if I waited and let them take the first shot? The plan didn't seem to make much sense, but I'd tried everything else and nothing had worked. So that's what I did. Instead of swaggering straight into battle, I lurked in the background and watched. And after a while I noticed a most extraordinary thing. It was as if the Baron of Hell was slowly being jostled into a corner by the others. Suddenly, an Imp let loose a fireball – but not aimed at me, at the Baron. He retaliated with a laser blast that sent three Imps flying. Then all hell broke loose.

They were fighting among themselves! All I had to do was wait on the sidelines, watch the carnage, and then clean up the stragglers at the end. Easy.

Soon the job was done. And then the joy at finally moving forward, slightly embarrassed at having been frustrated for so long, but revelling in the adrenaline rush of escaping one of gaming's trickiest traps. Truly a Great Gaming Moment.



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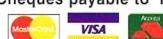
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